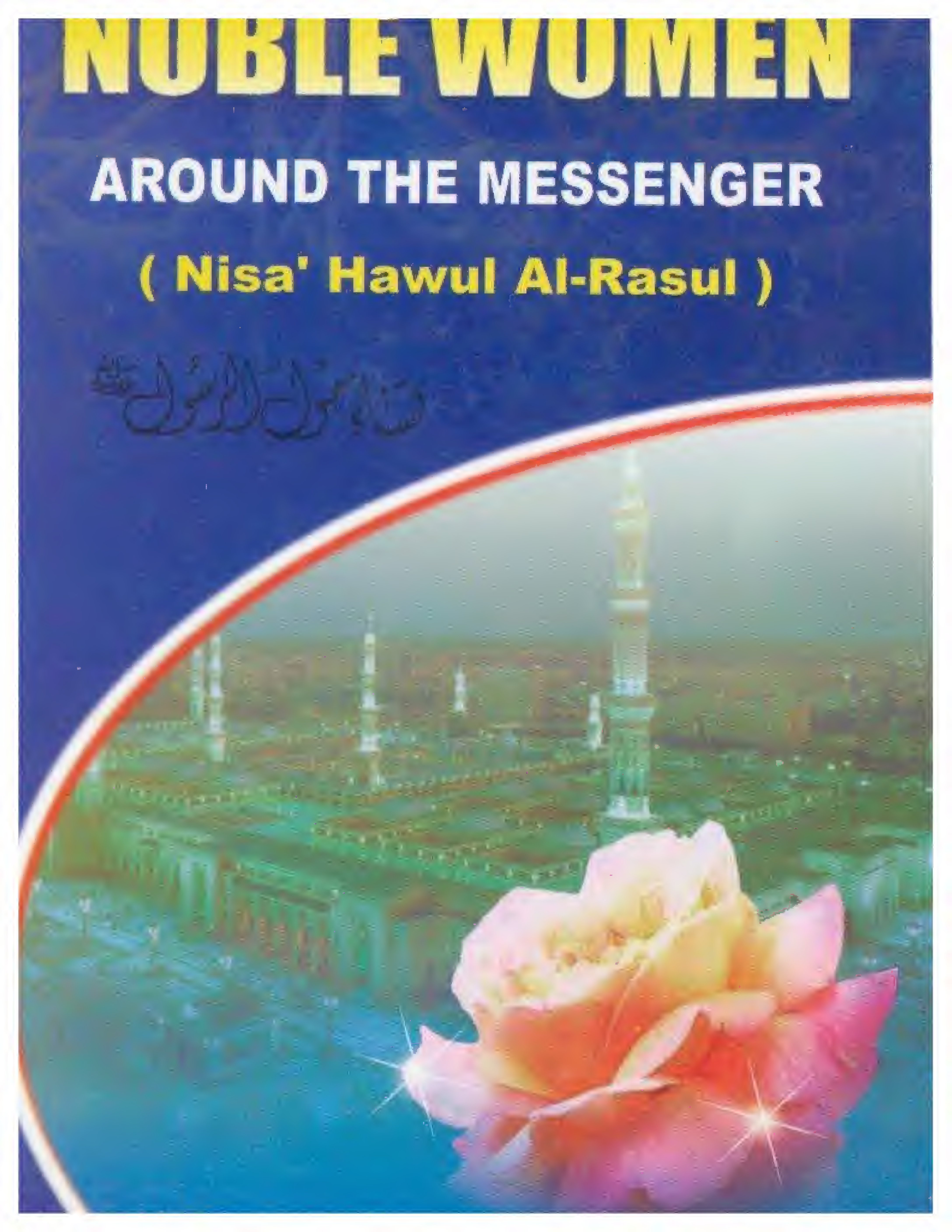

NOBLE WOMEN
AROUND THE MESSENGER
(Nisa' Hawul Al-Rasul)

Noble Women Around The Messenger

(Nisa' Hawul Ar-Rasul)

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST MERCIFUL, THE MOST BENEFICENT

DEDICATION

To my dear daughters Umamah and Danah, I pray to Allah that He may make of you worthy recipients with spiritual understanding about the wondrous lives of the Mothers of the Believers and the women Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. May their examples become your role models to follow.

AHMAD AL-JADA

Abu Hassan

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INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah and peace be on His last Messenger, Muhammad. The early Muslim *Ummah* and the Muslim society were founded on principles of co-operation between both men and women who lived around the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, dedicating their lives to follow the divine message that had been bestowed on him, the noblest of nobles.

Many authors since the beginning the Islamic era have recorded and written about the important role established by the Companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, during the early period of Islamic history. Also, many great men like the Companions, caliphs, and scholars that lived both during and after the Prophet's life contributed to the establishment and spread of Islam through the efforts of *Da'wah*. However, the role that women contributed at the beginning of Islamic history has often been overlooked or neglected, and as a result recorded data has been disproportionately unavailable, even though Islamic history is full of stories and accounts of women and the significant role that they played in

Islam. This book attempts to fill a gap by enlightening the reader a step further on the lives of these women as prodigies at the time of the Prophet. Their legacy is that of courage, integrity, and deep devotion to the message that the Blessed Prophet Muhammad brought to mankind. Their influence was to have a profound impact not only on their own generation but subsequent generations.

The noble women around the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, did not confine themselves to the corners of their homes nor occupy themselves with trivial matters. They were like shining stars in the galaxy of wonders of Islamic history. They possessed zeal and the will to sacrifice their lives and all that they were used to, such as family ties and familiar territories, purely for the sake of obeying Allah's command. We can hardly find again such pioneering women throughout Islamic history with such exemplary attributes as these first female adherents who followed and associated with Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Shouldn't Muslim women feel proud of Khadijah, who was the first person to embrace Islam? What about the glory of Sumayah, who was the first martyr in Islam?

What about Asma', young as she was, who frequently journeyed to the cave of Thawr while the Messenger of Allah sought refuge there during his migration? Shouldn't Muslim women proudly remember Umm Imarah, who stood steadfast in the Battle of Uhud when men fled in fear? What about the glory of 'A'ishah, who was among those who narrated the largest number of Prophetic Hadiths? And at the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, it was the advice of a woman which culminated in the peace among Muslims. What about the pride for Muslim women in that?

The history of all the women in the world with their achievements and pride does not measure up to the history of Muslim women who gained much more.

Muslim history is full of glorious events. Isn't it time to learn from them and follow the examples of our great women who fought with the Prophet (peace be upon him) for the sake of this religion?

When going through the history of Muslim women, I have found attitudes and incidents that are rarely found in non-Muslim women.

one and set off to participate in establishing Islam in the same way their predecessors did.

The dreams of such modern women are becoming true with signs of victory emerging on the horizons of Islam.

I pray to our Great Lord to grant us victory, to guide Muslim women to the right path, and to reward me for this book and all other books that I have written.

Praise be to Allah
Ahmad Al-Jada‘
Doha

3 Sha‘ban 1408 A.H.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was once sleeping in the house of Umm Haram Bint Malhan, when he woke up smiling. She said to him, "Why are you smiling, O Messenger of Allah?"

He replied, "I saw in my sleep a group of my followers who will undertake a naval expedition for the sake of Allah. They will be kings on thrones."

She said, "Pray that I may be among them." And he did . Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) slept again and when he woke up smiling she asked him, "Why are smiling, O Messenger of Allah?"

He replied, "I saw in my sleep a group of my followers fighting for the sake of Allah."

She cried, "Pray that I may be among them."

He said, "You are among the first of them."

The ambition of that female Companion went beyond the borders of Madinah at a time when Islam was still enclosed within the peninsula, and early Muslims never thought of fighting at sea. His (peace be upon him)

prophecy became reality when she lived under the caliphate of Mu'awiyah, who ruled over the Levant. It was at that time that the Muslims made their first battle at sea. Her readiness to fight in that prelude rendered her a martyr on the island of Cyprus where she (May Allah be pleased with her) was buried.

Isn't such a story a matter of pride? Doesn't it invite Muslim women to remember the glory days in Cyprus where our women are being tortured today by the new Crusaders?

This religion has raised women to a dignified and proud position, but the enemies want them to be humiliated by keeping them busy thinking of trivial matters.

Isn't the time ripe to rise and give a hand to the Islamic awakening in this age?

This is a goal we aspire to attain. Therefore, I wrote this book about noble women around the Messenger (peace be upon him) and I present it to those Muslim women who exchanged their western attire for the Islamic

Khadijah: The First Muslim Woman

I have never heard about any woman, Arab or non-Arab, more insightful than Khadijah. She was both beautiful and wealthy. When her husband died, many prominent figures of Makkah proposed to her, but wise as she was, she preferred to wait for the right person who could convince her by his high ideals.

Allah placed in her way Muhammad bin 'Abdullah, the poor orphan who was known by his kinsmen as Al-Amin, "The Trustworthy".

Muhammad was entrusted with Khadijah's business. He traveled with her trading caravan north to Syria and Palestine accompanied by her servant Maysarah, who was amazed by Muhammad's manners and generosity, an epitome of higher standing.

When Muhammad returned from the trading expedition with a profit, Maysarah told his employer, Khadijah, what he had seen of Muhammad. Afterwards, Khadijah met him and listened to him while he was calculating the final accounts. He was a handsome, lively young man with radiant eyes. She felt that he had certain moral values that no one in the whole tribe of Quraysh had, although they were known for their high moral standing. She admired him and expected that one day he would be of high status. In fact, she wanted him to be her husband, so she sent a female confidante of hers to delicately mention her name to Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a prospective wife.

Khadijah detected in Muhammad (peace be upon him) the good nature and the bright future by which he would be a glorious master and leader. Therefore, she wanted to share such a future with that young man from the Quraysh. Her dream came true. She surrounded him with care, tenderness, happiness, and tranquility and encouraged him to worship and to meditate on life. He lived happily and peacefully with her for fifteen years till he received the revelation from Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

It was in the cave of Hira' that the first revelation suddenly descended upon Muhammad bin 'Abdullah, and it was in that cave that he would retreat to contemplate Allah and the universe He created. He also would think of the people who live in it and how they suffer in their daily lives. The cave was at the peak of a mountain far from any habitations. Muhammad heard someone telling him "Read!" He was taken by surprise and said in a trembling voice, "I do not know how to read." Then the command came to him saying, "Read! Read in the Name of your Lord..."

Muhammad (peace be upon him) hastened home quivering with fear from what he had heard. It was Khadijah who alleviated his apprehension. He hurried to his bed saying, "Cover me, cover me!" Khadijah sat beside him and asked him to explain. He told her about what had happened and that he was worried that he could have been hurt.

Khadijah overwhelmed him with tenderness and, believing in him, told him confidently, "Allah will take care of us, Abul Qasim. Take the glad tidings, O cousin. By Him in Whose hands is the soul of Khadijah, I wish

you would be the Prophet of this *Ummah* (nation). By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and destitute, serve your guests generously, and assist the deserving when calamity afflicts them."

Khadijah was of the view that Muhammad would be the coming Prophet everyone was talking about. She had previously heard about him from her cousin Waraqah bin Nawfal, and she yearned for it greatly.

Then came that moment. After Muhammad had slept, she hurried to her cousin Waraqah, who had a profound knowledge in the Holy Scriptures. She narrated to him what she had heard from her husband. The old man listened attentively and said with energy, "Allah the Sacred! Allah the Sacred! By Allah in Whose hands is the soul of Waraqah, if what you are telling me is the truth, Khadijah, then it will be the same angel that Allah sent to Moses and Jesus. He is the Prophet of this *Ummah* and tell him to stand firm."

Khadijah was filled with joy. Only the day before, she had been the wife of the honest, good-mannered man

of the Quraysh. But today she was the wife of a prophet. What an honor!

She hurried home and sat beside her husband. She looked at him in admiration and decided to stand by him in spreading this divine message.

Muhammad did not sleep for long, as the new mission did not permit him to sleep. Thus, the next revelation came to him:

﴾O thou wrapped up (in a mantle). Arise and deliver thy warning!﴿

(Al-Muddaththir, 1-2)

There was no time to sleep; it was time to work. Khadijah told Muhammad (peace be upon him) all that Waraqah had said, and so they both went to see him. As soon as Waraqah saw Muhammad, he said, "By Allah in Whose hands is the soul of Waraqah, you are the Prophet of this *Ummah*. You will be accused of being a liar, you will be hurt, driven out, and fought against, and if I happen to remain alive till that day, then I will fight for the sake of Allah and He will know that."

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was overawed and asked, "Will they drive me out?"

Waraqah answered, "Yes. Anyone who came with something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility."

As Khadijah heard that the Prophet would be mistreated by his people and that he and she would be driven out from Makkah, their motherland, she realized that their life would be a great battle in the cause of Allah: jihad.

Khadijah's confidence in her husband only increased. She decided to stand by him and thus made her declaration of faith, which was recorded as a precedent for men and women, old and young. Being the first Muslim should be considered a victory for all women.

The *da'wah* continued as Allah planned. The will of Allah was that the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers were ill-treated by the Quraysh tribe. Although the believers suffered physical and financial harm, the polytheists never managed to weaken them. All of them,

men and women, remained patient in the face of adversity for the sake of Allah.

Khadijah was the best supporter of her husband and the other Muslims. She helped him with her money, care, and patience.

The more the Quraysh distressed the believers, the firmer and stronger they became. As the number of converts to Islam proliferated, the influential figures of the Quraysh feared losing their status. They took counsel and wrote up a document which ostracized Banu Hashim and Banu 'Abdul Muttalib, together with any supporter or follower of Muhammad and his religion. The Quraysh decided not to have any business dealings with them nor any sort of inter-marriage.

The Muslims, together with Banu Hashim and Banu 'Abdul Muttalib, were isolated in a narrow pass that belonged to Abu Talib. This rupture in relations lasted three years and oppressed the Muslims, sometimes to the extent that they had to eat the leaves of trees.

Khadijah was with her husband during that stifling blockade. She was patient and strong and never complained about the losses that resulted from their seclusion in society, even though she had always been a wealthy woman living in luxury and having servants.

Although her strong faith helped her in the resistance, she became feeble and tired. No sooner had she left the district than she died, still fully committed to her husband and *da 'wah*.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was so grieved by her death that he called the year in which she died "The Year of Sorrow". This was an emphatic gesture demonstrating great honor for his wife.

These are the real kinds of situations in which a woman can prove herself and achieve honor.

What sort of woman was she? What kind of fighter and supporter was she? May Allah bestow mercy on her and on any woman that follows her path.

Khadijah had an unforgettable role in the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He continued to remember and honor her till the day he died. 'A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said, "I did not feel as jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as much as I did of Khadijah because the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to mention her very often."

Because the Prophet (peace be upon him) was in the habit mentioning her frequently with love and respect, 'A'ishah, his favorite wife, was jealous.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said concerning Khadijah, "Allah blessed me with her love." And he said, "I love everyone she loved." Whenever he heard the voice of her sister Halah bint Khuwaylid in his house, he would say, "O Allah, Halah!" due to the comfort he felt on hearing her voice, which resembled Khadijah's.

'A'ishah's jealousy of her was so intense that she once said in a fury, "What makes you remember one of the old women of the Quraysh with a toothless mouth of red gums who died long ago, and in whose place Allah has given you someone better than her?" The Prophet's (peace

be upon him) face changed at this and he replied, "No, by Allah, Allah has not given me a better one in her place. She believed me when people belied me. She consoled me with her money when people deprived me, and from her alone I had children." 'A'ishah was silent and regretted her rudeness towards Khadijah (Bukhari 1575).

Khadijah was a great woman in all situations. Isn't she a venerable lady worthy of love and respect? Isn't this great woman who spent all her money for the sake of Allah worthy of accolade for this and for her place as the first Muslim? This was why the Prophet loved her and likewise why all the Muslims should love her.

Az-Zahra' FatimahBint

Muhammad (peace be upon him)

Whose daughter, whose wife and whose mother was Az-Zahra'?

She was the daughter of the master of all messengers and the master of all the descendants of Adam, Muhammad bin 'Abdullah (peace be upon him). She had the honor of being the daughter of the Messenger of Allah and of Khadijah, the first Muslim woman. She was the wife of 'Ali bin Abi Talib, whom Allah honored since childhood. 'Ali never worshiped an idol or a statue. He fought with the Prophet (peace be upon him) before maturity and was the fourth caliph. Fatimah was also the mother of Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn, the masters of all youth in Paradise.

Fatimah was five years old when her father was honored with prophethood. She grew up watching her father suffering from the reluctance of the Quraysh and their chieftains' aggression.

She felt sorry for him and tried to support him against his enemies. But what support could a girl less than ten years old offer?

The cruelest scene Fatimah witnessed in her life was when her father was praying in the yard around the Ka'bah. While he was prostrating, an insolent man from Makkah named 'Uqbah bin Abi Ma'it threw a camel's intestine on his head. Everybody began to laugh. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stayed in this position till Fatimah removed the filth from his back. Then he (peace be upon him) rose up and turned to the people of the Quraysh, looked at them firmly, and invoked the wrath of Allah upon them: "O Allah, take revenge on the people of the Quraysh. O Allah, take revenge on Abu Jahl, 'Utbah bin Rabi'ah, Shaybah bin Rabi'ah, 'Uqbah bin Abi Ma'it, and 'Ubay bin Khalaf."

The people of the Quraysh feared the consequences of his prayers because they knew of his credibility. Many years later during the Battle of Badr, Fatimah saw those very people whom he prayed against being killed around the well of Badr. Allah punished them for their evil deeds and ignorance.

Fatimah lived in the field of *da'wah* from her childhood and took part in those aspects which were appropriate to her age and gender.

Being the Prophet's (peace be upon him) youngest daughter, she stayed with her parents long after her three sisters had got married. The Prophet always mentioned her as the one most beloved to his heart.

When Muhammad received the revelation **﴾And admonish thy nearest kinsmen﴿**, (Ash-Shu'ara', 214) he gathered the Quraysh and said to them, "O people of the Quraysh, save yourself from Hellfire, as I cannot save you from Allah's punishment. O Banu 'Abdul Manaf! I cannot save you from Allah's punishment. O 'Abbas bin 'Abdul Muttalib! I cannot save you from Allah's punishment. O Safiyah! (the aunt of the Prophet—peace be upon him) I

cannot save you from Allah's punishment. O Fatimah bint Muhammad! Ask me for as much money as you wish, but I cannot save you from Allah's punishment."

How significant those words were to her. For sure they had an impact on her!

Again, when a woman from the tribe of Makhzum was caught stealing, the Quraysh sent Usamah bin Zayd to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to intercede for her. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was very angry and gave a furious oration to the people. "By Allah, if Fatimah bint Muhammad were guilty of theft, Muhammad would cut off her hand."

He meant that even if the thief were the nearest to his heart, this would not stop him from executing Allah's ruling on him or her. This proves the absolute justice of Islam, whereby any punishment should be carried out whether the guilty party is one of the elite or a commoner.

Fatimah lived in a house founded on prophethood, where she was brought up given a Qur'anic education. Therefore, all the Islamic values were embodied in her.

She was receptive to her surroundings and tried to participate in the major events, young as she was. Thus she had a distinguished place in her father's heart. He (peace be upon him) said, "Fatimah is but a part of me. What disturbs her, disturbs me, and what offends her offends me." He also said in her favor, "These four are the best women in all mankind: Maryam, Asiyah, Khadijah, and Fatimah."

These words elevated her as one of the best four and also the daughter of one of them, namely Khadijah. That's a true honor.

By time, the Muslims became further ill-treated, and the Quraysh's attempts to fight the new religion became more severe. The more they failed, the more they hurt the Muslims. Then Allah permitted the Prophet to emigrate, leaving the city nearest to his heart, Makkah, for Madinah.

The two sisters, Fatimah and Umm Kalthum, were left behind in Makkah waiting for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to permit them to leave. When he did, they left with broken hearts and tears in their eyes. The two girls

were amazed to see the cruelty of the Quraysh towards their converting sons and daughters when one of them, Al-Huwayrith bin Naqidh, followed them and hit their camel, causing them to fall to the ground. This incident only vindicated their belief in the absurdity of their ignorant behavior.

Fatimah reached Madinah exhausted. She complained about the aggression of the Quraysh and the troubles on their journey. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) heard this, he vowed death for this evil man.

This incident was not the only act of aggression towards Muslim women. Abu Jahl killed Sumayah bint Khabbat shamelessly. Also, the Quraysh attacked Umm Salamah and separated her from her husband, and, moreover, they tore her child into two in front of her very eyes.

Zaynab was also attacked by the Quraysh when she was on her way to Madinah. They caused her to have a miscarriage, and it was this incident which resulted in her illness and subsequent death.

Those who defended the Quraysh tried to depict them as honorable by denying that they hurt women. But such incidents revealed that the Quraysh were far from being honorable, as they never kept their word with a believer, whether man or woman.

This is the *jahiliyah* (ignorance) agenda practiced by the Quraysh, the Jews, the Christians, or even those of modernistic trends. The main characteristics of *jahiliyah* have been the same throughout the ages, even if people try to decorate it or give it a false appearance.

In Madinah, Fatimah lived with her father and ran the house. It was a job she was happy to take charge of.

When Fatimah was nearly eighteen, 'A'ishah joined the household of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as his wife. Fatimah was aware that the chores would no longer be hers and would be taken care of by the new young lady who came from the house of As-Siddiq. This must have upset her a great deal, as she was proud of serving her father and running his house. At that time, many young suitors approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) to ask for Fatima's hand in marriage. Both Abu

Bakr and 'Umar proposed to her, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) apologized gently. People began to talk about Fatimah and the excellence of the suitors coming to ask her hand in marriage. They informed 'Ali bin Abi Talib and encouraged him to propose. 'Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) said, "After Abu Bakr and 'Umar?" When they reminded him of the ties of kinship between him and the Prophet, he gathered courage to go and sit with the Prophet (peace be upon him). 'Ali was too shy to speak, so the Prophet (peace be upon him) made a discerning effort to break the ice and asked him, "What does 'Ali bin Abi Talib want?" 'Ali mentioned Fatimah, the daughter of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him). The Prophet then said, "Welcome!"

That word "welcome" calmed 'Ali's heart. He, as well as his friends, understood that it meant that the Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted him as a husband for his daughter and one of his family, just as he had been used to before wishing to marry Fatimah.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him, "What will you give her for her dower?"

'Ali answered, "I have nothing to offer as a dower."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Where is the shield of Al-Hatmiyah that I once gave you?"

'Ali said, "I still have it."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Give it to her as her dower."

This great moment had special implications. When 'Ali proposed to marry a daughter of the Prophet, he had no idea that the dower could be an obstacle. He knew that marriage in Islam is based on religion and moral values rather than financial considerations and that the dower is only a symbol of the sacred marriage tie. The Prophet himself (peace be upon him) once said, "If one whose religiousness and manners comes to you (to marry your daughter), accept him."

Did the Prophet (peace be upon him) refuse him when he heard him saying, "I don't have anything to give as a dower"? Did he rebuke him for proposing even

though he didn't have a penny? The Prophet a shield did neither and instead asked him in a fatherly and gentle manner, "Where is the shield of Al-Hatmiyah that I once gave you?" When 'Ali answered that it was still in his possession, the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him to present it as a dower to Fatimah.

Thus, 'Ali gave Fatimah as a dower a shield that was initially a present from her father. Marriage used to be as simple as that at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and all his wives and daughters are good examples of this despite being the noblest of all women in humanity.

Such simplicity remained for years till those who preferred to complicate things asked for extravagant dowers. Therefore, money has become an obstacle to Muslim men and women who wish to marry and remain chaste.

Although the shield became Fatimah's, it was expected one day that 'Ali would use it in fighting the enemies of Allah. Of what use to Fatimah was an object only needed by men in battle?

By the time the wedding day arrived, 'Ali had sold his camel and some of his personal belongings for four hundred and eight dirhams. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) heard this, he told him, "Spend two-thirds of the money on perfume and the remaining third on household articles." The Prophet (peace be upon him) was known for his love of perfume. He loved it for himself and for the Muslims, so he liked his followers to wear scent as often as possible. This is why he asked 'Ali to wear a lot on his wedding day.

He also said to 'Ali, "O 'Ali, the bride must have a banquet." Then the people around him volunteered to make the wedding banquet. Sa'd, one of the Ansar, said, "I have a lamb," and another group of Ansar brought grain.

It was a happy day full of perfume, and everybody shared the joy of the bride and the groom around the banquet. This is how an Islamic wedding should be. Why have we—or many of us—changed it? The Prophet (peace be upon him) furnished his daughter's house with a bed, a leather pillow stuffed with felt, a leather flask for drinking, and a waterskin. Other people covered the floor of their house with sand. In the evening, the Prophet (peace be

upon him) said to ‘Ali, “Don’t do anything till I meet you.” Then he (peace be upon him) went to the bride and groom and asked them to get him a bowl in which he made ablution, then poured that water for ‘Ali saying, “May Allah bless them and bless their descendents.” Then he beckoned Fatimah, who was shy and stumbled in her dress with embarrassment. The Prophet (peace be upon him) wetted her with the same water, prayed for her, and then said, “O Fatimah, by Allah, I only spared you so that you marry the best one in my family.”

That was Allah’s Messenger. He blessed his daughter’s marriage, confirming to her that he had done his utmost to choose the best husband for her.

The marriage of Fatimah and ‘Ali was a historical event. No other marriage has ever had such results. Islamic history is full of incidents that happened in the east and west as a result of that marriage. It was so influential that an Islamic caliphate that ruled for centuries over a wide expanse was named after her: the Fatimad dynasty.

This house that had such an impact on the history of Islam was a humble one. It had nothing in it but a

leather bed, a drinking bowl, and two jars. As mentioned in one narration, the couple used to do the housework by themselves although this was hard work. When they found out that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had come to Madinah with some prisoners of war, 'Ali told Fatimah, "I have worked till I start to complain about pain in my chest, and your father has brought some prisoners of war. Go and ask him for one of them to help us with the chores."

Fatimah also said, "As for me, by Allah, I have been grinding till my hands suffer from the hand mill." She went to her father to make her request.

On reaching his house, she sat silent beside him. He said to her, "Why did you come, my daughter?"

Fatimah was too shy to ask him and said, "I came to ask about you."

When she returned home, her husband asked her how she had got on. She said, "I was too shy to ask him." Then 'Ali rose taking her by the hand and they went to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

'Ali said, "By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, I have worked hard till I complain about pain in my chest, and Fatimah's hands suffer from the hand mill. Yet Allah has sent us captives. Will you give us one?"

The Prophet answered "By Allah, I will not give you any while the people of As-Suffah are starving." Fatimah and 'Ali went home unoffended, for they already knew that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was always fair to his people.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) realized that his daughter and cousin were in need of some relief from their suffering. He followed them to their house and told them with overflowing tenderness, "Shall I teach you something that is better than what you have asked of me?"

They said, "Yes."

"Then learn and repeat these words that I have learned from Gabriel. After every prayer say: *Subhan Allah* ten times, *Al-Hamdu Lillah* ten times, and *Allahu Akbar* ten times. And when you go to bed, say: *Subhan*

Allah thirty-three times, *Al-Hamdu Lillah* thirty-three times, and *Allahu Akbar* thirty-four times."

This was what the Prophet offered his daughter and her husband: a strong rope connecting them to Allah, so that whenever they prayed or went to bed they held fast to that rope.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was pleased to see signs of satisfaction on both their faces, and he then left comfortable because the house he loved was happy. 'Ali and Fatimah retired to bed afterwards, and when they covered their heads with the velvet bed cover, their feet were bare. When they covered their feet, their heads were bare. But despite all that, reciting *Subhan Allah*, *Al-Hamdu Lillah* and *Allahu Akbar* sufficed them; it was richer than all the glamour of life.

Fatimah's house was overwhelmed with happiness when she gave birth to Al-Hasan, Al-Husayn, Umm Kalthum, and Zaynab. Those children filled them and the Prophet (peace be upon him) with joy.

Day by day, the Muslims conquered many areas till they conquered Makkah. Eventually the whole Arab Peninsula submitted to Islam. Fatimah rejoiced at the victories so that whenever she heard about one, she would hurry to her father's house to congratulate him. Her visits pleased him, and he would receive her and her children with the warmest welcome. On one visit, her father spoke to her confidentially. The following is the story as narrated by 'A'ishah, Mother of the Believers:

> We, the wives of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), were with him (during his last illness) and none was absent around him. Fatimah, who walked after the manner of the Messenger of Allah, went to him. When he saw her, he welcomed her saying, "You are welcome, my daughter." He then beckoned her to sit on his right side and told her something in secret that caused her to weep bitterly. Finding her grief stricken, he confided in her for the second time and she laughed.
>
> I said to her, "The Messenger of Allah has singled you out among the women (of the family) by speaking to you about something secretly and you

wept." When the Messenger of Allah recovered from his illness, I said to her, "What did Allah's Messenger say to you?"

She replied, "I am not going to disclose the secret of the Messenger of Allah."

When he died, I said to her, "I adjure you by the right that I have upon you that you should narrate to me what Allah's Messenger said to you."

She said, "Yes, now I can do that (so listen to it). When he talked to me secretly for the first time, he informed me that Gabriel was in the habit of reciting the Qur'an along with him once or twice every year, but this year it had been twice and so he perceived his death quite near. 'So fear Allah and be patient,' (he told me), and that he would be a befitting forerunner for me. So I wept as you saw me. And when he saw me in grief he talked to me secretly for the second time and said, 'Fatimah, are you not pleased that you should be at the head of the believing women or the head of this *Ummah*?' I

laughed and it was that laughter you saw." (Sahih Muslim, 6004).

Fatimah lived for six months after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). She died on Tuesday, 3 Ramadan, 11 A.H. at the age of twenty-nine. There was no friend or peer equal to her in the details of her innocent life or the effect she had on the history of Islam. Therefore it became natural that authors, historians, poets, and writers of *sirah* (the Prophet's biography) still mention her, Fatimah Az-Zahra'.

I would like to complete this with a fitting epilogue by the poet laureate, Muhammad Iqbal, entitled "Fatimah Az-Zahra'":

The story of Maryam was made immortal by Jesus.
But Fatimah's one for three reasons was glorious.
Whose daughter, whose wife, whose mother was she?
And who excels her father in greatness?
She was the light of the Prophet's eyes,
He who guided the nations who longed for guidance.
Her husband had on his head a crown of Surah Hal Ata,*
Brighter than the sun when it rises.

Shooting his arrows at the hardships to destroy them.
Standing like a lion in Allah's fortress.
In Fatimah's garden grew two unparalleled boughs
That no one else but she ever begets.
Her sons were commanders of the Jihad army
And makers of the unity and peacefulness.
She was an ideal example for all mothers to follow
And a comfort for whoever came to her in distress.
She did her best to give him relief. O clouds,
Your rain is nothing when compared to her usefulness.
Her lips recited Qur'an while her hands ground the barley,
Over the hand mill stress.
Except for observing the commands of the Prophet,
I would have revolved around her grave
And given the ground under her body a warm kiss.

*The question "Hal ata?" marks the beginning of Surah Al-Insan, which was revealed in honor of 'Ali bin Abi Talib when he gave all the food in his house to the poor, leaving nothing for himself or his household to eat.

Zaynab the Elder, Daughter of the Prophet (Peace Be upon Him)

Zaynab was the daughter of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Khadijah, the first Muslim. She was married to her cousin Abul 'As bin Rabi', who belonged to the family of 'Abdul Shams bin 'Abdul Manaf. His mother was Halah bint Khuwaylid, Khadijah's sister.

Zaynab was the Prophet's eldest daughter and the first of his offspring. Her marriage to Abul 'As was before the advent of Islam. They cherished one another, and she had a special place in the hearts of her husband, her mother-in-law, and her own parents. The joy between the two families increased when the couple was blessed with two babies, a boy named 'Ali and a girl named Umamah.

Zaynab's life passed smoothly until the most memorable point in the history of Makkah came. Her father was chosen to be a Prophet. Thereupon she suffered

and struggled in a way that was trying enough on men let alone women.

Zaynab managed to face those difficulties and became worthy of being the daughter of Muhammad, the leader of all Prophets and the last of all Messengers.

Being a daily visitor to her fathers house, she was well informed from the onset of his prophethood of all the trials he faced. When she learned of her father being the Prophet of the *Ummah*, she immediately declared her belief in it. How could she not have believed if she already knew her father's manners and moral values? Was it possible not to believe when she loved him in a way that she never loved anyone else?

But she worried whether her husband would believe in her father's message or deny it. She contemplated the matter deeply. She told him about the great honor her father had by having a religion revealed to him. She did so enthusiastically and he listened carefully. After she had finished, she asked him his opinion, but she was startled to find him silent, and when she insisted fearfully to have an answer, he said that he did not

consider it suitable for him to believe in the new faith. She declared firmly that she believed in her father. He left the house in silence.

Zaynab's position towards *da'wah* was always of a steadfast nature. Despite her deep love for her husband, she did not hesitate to hold fast to her faith, even if he insisted on turning his back to it.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) continued to call others to Islam. Some people of the Quraysh accepted it, while others rejected it. The more people came to Islam, the more hostile the enemies became.

The resisting front of the Quraysh met one day to discuss the problem. They had tried all means of fighting the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his religion, but this time they thought of a new idea. One of them said, "You are first helping Muhammad to be carefree, and so he can concentrate on his *da'wah*. Send his daughters back to him and that will make him busy again." What a devilish idea!

Muhammad's daughters, Ruqayah and Umm Kalthum, were married to the Prophet's two cousins

‘Utbah and ‘Utaybah, while Zaynab was married to Abul ‘As bin Rabi‘.

The chieftains of Makkah liked the idea and hurried to Abu Lahab, the Prophet’s uncle and father-in-law of his two daughters. He was surprised by the demand that his two sons should divorce Muhammad’s daughters.

It was true that Abu Lahab was a bitter enemy of his nephew, but divorcing the two women was considered a shameful act at that time. Thus Abu Lahab hesitated and remained silent. They suspected what was going on in his mind, so they left him to the devices of his wife, Umm Jamil bint Harb, who was carrying the banner of animosity against Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his religion. As soon as Umm Jamil rebuked her husband for his delay in carrying out the plan, he immediately submitted and forgot all the noble motives of preserving blood ties.

Umm Jamil called her sons and said to them, “Listen to what the elders of your tribe want to tell you.”

They said, “We hear and obey.”

As Umm Jamil was domineering with her sons, she told them that they were ordered to divorce Muhammad's daughters and choose other women from the Quraysh. The command was non-negotiable, resulting in the two husbands hurrying back to their wives and ordering them to return to their father's house.

The Quraysh were happy to have succeeded in that plan, and they hurried to Abul 'As to persuade him to divorce Muhammad's third daughter. They said to him, "Divorce your wife and we'll marry you to any woman you like."

But they were struck by his answer. "No, by Allah, I will never leave my wife and I don't want to have any other woman."

The conspirators left in disappointment because of their failure to persuade him to divorce his wife. Although the man did not want to follow Muhammad, he loved his wife and saw it a matter of shame and lowness to divorce her just to please the insolent chieftains of the Quraysh.

Many events followed: suffering, patience, and struggling on the part of the Prophet and his followers, and cruelty, injustice, and oppression on the part of the Quraysh. Zaynab was part of those events. How could she live happily with her loving husband while her father was belied and his followers were tortured?

Her suffering was shared with her family throughout the support for their father, whether verbal or in the heart. Then came the decisive day in Makkah when the Quraysh tried to murder the Prophet (peace be upon him). Allah commanded His Messenger to emigrate, and he did.

The Islamic *da'wah* proliferated swiftly towards the expected victory in the town receiving the immigrants to Madinah. Loneliness encompassed Zaynab after the death of her mother and the significant step of her father, who emigrated with her sisters. Although it was hard on her, the news of the great victories of Islamic *da'wah* in Madinah helped relieve her. She always hoped that her husband would believe and take her to Madinah, but he stood his ground in neither believing nor committing any

act of aggression. He remained a loving husband and never allowed anyone, no matter who, to hurt her.

As time passed, the Islamic front grew more disciplined, while the disbelieving front grow more chaotic. At last, time came to put an end to such conflict, for the peninsula could not embrace the two opposing doctrines concurrently. Then came the Battle of Badr.

The unbelievers were sure that victory was on their side as they were large in number and the Muslims were few.

All the prominent figures of Makkah joined in the fighting against Muhammad, among them Abul 'As, Zaynab's husband. Zaynab's heart was filled with grief as her father, the dearest one on earth to her heart, led the believers to meet the Quraysh. She wished the war would never be waged, as she would be hurt no matter who won.

The messengers of the Quraysh returned to Makkah with the news of the expected victory and the tremendous Quraysh preparations that would defeat the Muslims at the first moment. There was talk of the spoils

of war and the celebrations they would make for the victory. Such news exacerbated Zaynab's grief, as her love and loyalty were only to her father and his army of believers. She was anxious for their victory, but at the onset of the battle, news to the contrary reached the women, children, and sick of Makkah who were the only dwellers remaining behind.

Muhammad and his companions conquered the Quraysh, and its chieftains were killed, captured, or chased away. When the survivors returned from Badr to Makkah, Zaynab set off to search for her husband, fearing his absence. On asking the survivors, she was informed that he was among the prisoners of war and was taken to her father in Madinah. It was only then that the weight on her heart lightened. As long as he was in her father's trust, he would be well treated, if not for his status in the Quraysh, at least for her place in her father's heart.

A few days after the defeat of the Quraysh, she began to anticipate the release of the captives, and so relatives journeyed to pay the ransom for them. The family of Abul 'As were prepared to do so, but Zaynab insisted to pay the ransom herself. She gave her brother-in-law a

necklace that her mother had given her as a wedding present and asked him to give it to her father to set her husband free.

'Amr bin Rabi', the brother of Abul 'As, approached the Prophet with out-stretched hand saying, "Zaynab, the daughter of Muhammad, sent me with this necklace to ransom my brother Abul 'As bin Rabi'"

As the Prophet opened the package before him, he found Khadijah's necklace. It reminded him of the ones dearest to his heart, namely his wife and daughter. His heart softened and he said to those around him, "This is Khadijah's necklace sent to me by Zaynab to ransom her husband, Abul 'As bin Rabi'. If you agree to set her husband free and give her back the necklace, then do so, please."

They cried in unison, "We do, O Messenger of Allah."

Abul 'As observed the whole event. This incident became engraved on his heart and affected him afterwards.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked Abul 'As to come closer and when he did, he whispered to him and Abul 'As nodded consent, then left for Makkah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) turned to those Muslims sitting with him and said, "By Allah, we have never eschewed his praise as a son-in-law."

Abul 'As reached Makkah and headed straight for his home. His heart was broken as the Prophet (peace be upon him) had made him promise to allow Zaynab to emigrate because Islam had separated them. Zaynab the believer was no longer fit for Abul 'As the polytheist, despite the love and kinship that had tied them together for many years. In fact, Islam has honored the Muslim woman by prohibiting her marriage to a non-Muslim. When Abul 'As entered his house, his face did not look like that of a loving husband who had survived war and come back to his beloved. Zaynab welcomed him, but he did not react to sweet words of praise. Sensitive to his cold response, she asked him what was wrong and was told to emigrate to her father in Madinah within a few days.

"And what about you, cousin?" she asked. But he was silent. She could not believe that her husband would

allow her travel to another city without him, but she read it clearly in his face. Zayd bin Harithah would come from Madinah to accompany her and meet her in a place near Makkah named Batn Ya'juj.

When the day came, Abul 'As asked his brother Kinanah to take her to Batn Ya'juj where Zayd would be waiting.

Zaynab was in the fourth month of pregnancy, so her husband prepared a comfortable howdah for the journey.

It was daylight and Kinanah escorted her out of Makkah, but there was an incongruous group of people ahead who spotted them and considered her emigration in the broad daylight a blatant challenge to them. They hurried to their weapons and chased her. Those who caught up with her caravan asked Kinanah to take her back, but he refused. Then one of them, Habbar bin Al-Aswad, tried to cow her with his spear, but she fell from her camel, bled, and lost her baby.

Kinanah began to take out his arrows and threaten the men, saying, "By Allah, if any one of you approaches me, I'll shoot." They all retreated as they saw him insist on defending Zaynab. Abu Sufyan bin Harb then stepped in and said, "Put away your arrows. We want to talk to you." Kinanah did so, and Abu Sufyan declared, "You were wrong in taking the woman in front of everyone, even though you already knew what befell us at the hands of Muhammad. This will make people think that we have been humiliated and weakened. We gain nothing by keeping her here. Take her home till people calm down and think that we have managed to stop her. Then take her secretly to her father."

Kinanah looked at Zaynab and saw her bleeding heavily. He thought it would be better for her to return to her house to recover and then set off on her journey again. He took her home where she was nursed by the women of the family.

The men who hurt Zaynab were jubilant of their deed and even thought that her return to her husband's house was a victory over the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hind bint 'Utbah saw what they did together with her

husband, Abu Sufyan, and she teased them saying sarcastically, "In war you are like women and in peace you are harsh." Her mockery concerned their defeat by Muhammad on one occasion and their victory over his daughter on another.

This group of men left overwhelmed with shame. Even their women and daughters criticized their hateful deed. Zaynab recovered quickly and, within a few days, was guided by Kinanah to Zayd bin Harithah. His return to Makkah was one of pride.

Zaynab's journey was long. She yearned for her great father, who received her on her arrival in the typical way any father receives his daughter after a long absence and troubled journey.

Zaynab was honored to stay in her father's house. The more the days passed after leaving her husband, the more she wondered why she didn't hear about him and how he could tolerate the separation although he loved her. Wasn't it he who had refused the Quraysh's offer of marriage to their most beautiful woman if he agreed to divorce her? Wasn't it he who was famous for his poetry

which he used to recite each time he left her for trading expeditions, mentioning her sweet nature and the honorable manners of her father? All of these meant that she had a special place in his heart. How could he forget her? Her confusion by this absence remained despite her knowing his love for her. There was no news of him remarrying, so why was he so late? She expected him to knock at her door declaring his conversion to Islam and his subsequent reunion in the house he had always loved. Even though she waited a long time, she never last hope in her husband's return.

On one of his trading expeditions to the Levant, he was accosted by the Muslim army, who blocked his way and took all his possessions. Abul 'As fled, finding only Madînah, and in it his wife, as his refuge. He knocked at her door and surprised her. She exclaimed in confusion, "Welcome cousin! Are you at last guided to what is right?"

Abul 'As lowered his head, then raised it in embarrassment and said, "In fact, I did not come as a Muslim. I came as a fugitive from the Muslims in pursuit of me and I am seeking refuge with you from them."

Zaynab had mixed feelings: pain from the frustrating answer and hope for his conversion. She said, "Welcome Abu 'Ali. Whoever seeks refuge with the Messenger of Allah will never be disappointed."

The night passed and the *adhan* of Fajr prayer was called. Zaynab felt her father getting ready for the prayer. She prepared herself to do something that no woman had dared to do before her. She would declare loudly that she had offered refuge to Abul 'As, but on second thought, she doubted whether her father would approve of her action. Was it permissible for a woman to offer refuge to anyone?

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was about to raise his voice with *takbir* to start the prayer with the Muslims behind him. Zaynab decided to carry out what she intended to do. She brought her head outside the door and cried in a loud voice, "I have offered refuge to Abul 'As bin Rabi'." Her cry was heard by everyone.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) had finished the prayer he said, "O people, did you hear what I heard?"

They said, “Yes, O Messenger of Allah, We heard what you heard.”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, “By Him in Whose hands my soul is, I did not know about this till I heard what you heard. The Muslims are one hand against their enemies, and we will offer refuge to whomever she has offered it.”

When he (peace be upon him) had finished his prayer, he went to his daughter, who was with Abul ‘As. She hurried to her father in anxiety and said, “O Messenger of Allah, Abul ‘As is my cousin and the father of my sons, and I have given him refuge.”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) smiled and said, “We offer refuge to whomever you offer it, my daughter. Be generous to him, but don’t let him touch you as it is still not legally acceptable.”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) left for his house, and she followed him and asked him to let Abul ‘As get back what had been taken from him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) promised to do so. She returned to Abul ‘As

satisfied and looked at him in an accusing manner. He managed to leave her, but he returned her a promising look.

Abul 'As attended the Prophet's meeting while his Companions surrounded him. The amount of respect and obedience paid to the Prophet amazed him. Such love and loyalty had never been seen by him in any of the travels he made to the Persian or Byzantine emperors. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) motioned to speak, everybody listened with great respect.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, pointing to Abul 'As, "That man is one of us, as you know, and you have taken his money. If you are benevolent to him and give him his money back, I'll appreciate that. But if you don't want to give it to him, it will be your right, as it is from the spoils of war that Allah has favored you with."

Then the Companions answered in unison, "We will give him his money back." After saying so, they collected his property and returned it to him. Then they asked him, "Is there anything else?"

He answered, "No. May Allah reward you the best."

Abul 'As set off to Makkah with his money and goods. The Prophet (peace be upon him) followed him with his eyes saying, "When he spoke to me, he was true, and when he promised, he fulfilled his word."

When Abul 'As reached Makkah, he called the people of Quraysh to collect their share of the profit. After they all had taken their money, he said to them, "O people of Quraysh, is there anyone who has not taken his money?"

They said to him, "No, may Allah reward you the best. We have always seen you as faithful and generous."

Then he pronounced to them, "Then, I testify that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. By Allah, what hindered me from declaring my coming to Islam was that I was afraid lest you should think I wanted to take your money. Now that I have returned your money, I declare my Islam."

The people were dumbstruck. And, as for him, he emigrated quickly to Madinah, stood before the Prophet and uttered the two testimonies. All the Muslims hastened to congratulate him. They were always pleased with whatever pleased the Prophet (peace be upon him) and they always knew that the Prophet had wished Abul 'As to be a Muslim.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted his daughter to return to her husband, and thus Zaynab's house, as well as all the houses of the Prophet's family, was overwhelmed with happiness. The people realized that the Prophet really loved his daughter and was pleased to see her reunited with her husband.

A year after this event, Zaynab became ill and died. Her husband mourned deeply for her loss. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stood by him and his grief was not less than her husband's.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent for the women who were washing her dead body and said to them, "Wash her three or five times with water and lotus, and then add the essence of camphor in the final wash. Start by

her right side and the areas of ablution, and when you finish, inform me."

The women did as he (peace be upon him) instructed, and when they had finished they told him. He gave them a piece of his clothing and said, "Wrap her in it." The women took the Prophet's garment, put it on her and buried her.

Zaynab's daughter, Umamah, remained as the sweet memory of her mother. She was one of the loveliest members of the Prophet's family and dearest to his heart. 'A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was once given a necklace as a present and said, "I'll give it to the dearest one in my family."

All the women said, "The daughter of Abu Quhafa ('A'ishah) will take it." But he called Umamah to him and hung it around her neck.

Safiyah bint 'Abdul Muttalib

Safiyah was a woman from the noble Hashimite family. Her father, 'Abdul Muttalib, was the son of Hashim, the unparalleled chieftain of the Quraysh. Her brother was Hamzah bin 'Abdul Muttalib, who earned the title "The Lion of Allah and His Messenger." Her husband was Al-'Awam bin Khuwaylid, the brother of Khadijah, Mother of the Faithful. Her son was Az-Zubayr bin Al-'Awam, a Muslim cavalryman and Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who was among the ten given the good tidings of a place in Paradise. And last but not least, she was the aunt of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the noblest of Adam's descendents and the Seal of Prophets and Messengers. This labyrinth of kinship demonstrates how Safiyah was encompassed by honor, not to mention her own firm and eloquent manners, which were typically Hashimite.

But her husband died leaving her and little Az-Zubayr. From then on, she wanted her son to be mature, courageous, and famously heroic. Therefore, she treated him with a firmness that exposed her to criticism, even from men.

The boy's uncle criticized her for hitting him and told her, "The boy should not be hit like that. You are beating him in a hard way as if you hate him." But Safiyah, who perceived that the firmness would make a gallant man out of him, answered the uncle in the following lines of poetry:

To say I hate him is false and silly.
I only hit him to be smart and witty,
To be ardent in wars and defeat his enemy,
To be generous and never to hide his money,
And not to eat all the dates and still be hungry!

This was how Safiyah wanted her son to be: erudite, generous, and unselfish. The following incident portrays the maturity that Az-Zubayr acquired from his upbringing. As a little boy, he once quarreled with a well-built man. Az-Zubayr overcame him and broke one of his legs. When Safiyah hurried to see the commotion, she saw

a huge man carried by people and learned what had happened to him at the hands of her son. With motherly pride she addressed the man, "How did you find Az-Zubayr? A cat or a hawk?"

Safiyah was among the first group of people who embraced Islam. The special place she held in the Prophet's heart (peace be upon him) was emphasized when Allah revealed the following to His Messenger:

﴾And admonish thy nearest kinsmen﴿

(Al-Shu'ara', 214).

As he (peace be upon him) stood before the people to advise and warn them, the Prophet (peace be upon him) elucidated this to the people nearest and dearest to him by saying, "O Safiyah, aunt of Allah's Messenger! I cannot save you from Allah's punishment. O Fatimah bint Muhammad, ask me anything from my money but I cannot save you from Allah's punishment."

Hence, both his daughter Fatimah and his aunt Safiyah were the dearest to his heart. Being one of those chosen by Allah to build the nascent Muslim society, she emigrated to Madinah with her son. And it was this society

which formed the cornerstone of the Islamic state and was instrumental in the spread of Islam.

The struggle between belief and disbelief had begun. When the believing army defeated the army of polytheists, the Quraysh and Jews were furious, thus causing them to become allies of one another in their mission to stand in the way of Islam. The Jews, who lived in Madinah with the Muslims, acted as spies and informers for the Quraysh, only inciting them to war. The Quraysh made the necessary preparations and proceeded towards Madinah in order to vanquish—as they thought—the Muslims. The Prophet (peace be upon him) prepared to meet the enemy and led the Muslim army to Uhud. All the men went to war and some women followed them as medical aides. Those who remained in Madinah joined in supplication to their Lord.

That battle was meant to be a test for the believers. A large number were martyred, among them Hamzah bin 'Abdul Muttalib, Safiyah's brother and an intrepid fighter. He had killed many important Quraysh figures, and so in their fury they mutilated and disfigured his dead body.

When Safiyah learned about the martyrdom of her brother and the fate of his corpse, she hurried to the soldiers who were burying their dead. The Prophet (peace be upon him) saw her approaching in a hurry and said to her son, "Let her go back so she that doesn't see what befell her brother, Hamzah bin 'Abdul Muttalib."

Az-Zubayr hurried and stopped her saying, "O mother, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) commands you to go back."

"Why?" she questioned. "I've already heard that my brother's body was disfigured after death. This is but a humble thing to sacrifice for the cause of Allah. I'm quite contented with what happened, and I'll be patient with Allah's will."

Such was the condition of a believing woman, deep in her faith and strong in her patience. When she was first shocked, she uttered the words of faith and patience. The Prophet (peace be upon him) learned about her reaction and wise words and told her son, "Let her go."

She approached the corpse of her brother, looked at him, and prayed Allah to forgive him. Then she murmured, "To Allah we belong and to Him we return." Safiyah remained by him till the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered his burial. And she lamented soto voce, neither crying nor slapping her face. Her grief was profound but within the bounds of Islam.

As a poetess she recited the following elegy for her brother:

Allah has invited you to His happy Paradise.
I'll never forget you. Neither will my eyes
Stop shedding tears with my heart that cries
With every breeze of Saba and with sunrise.
I hope my bones are eaten by hyenas,
And in the stomachs of vultures my body lies.

The Jews thought that this assault could be repeated and that one more attempt would result in the final blow to the Muslims. They sought alliance with the Quraysh and the other Arab tribes against the Muslims and succeeded in building the largest army in the Arab Peninsula to that point in time. In their bellicose manner, they set forth to fight the Muslims.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) took protective measures before the tremendous army. He dug a trench around the city and made a truce with the Jews of Banu Qurayza. The women were well protected in the fortress of Hassan bin Thabit, who was asked to take care of them. Safiyah bint 'Abdul Muttalib was one of them, and with her usual spirit she encouraged the others and tended to the children:

The enemy's siege of Madinah lasted a long time, which was difficult for the Muslims. But what made it more trying was that the Jews of Banu Qurayza broke their covenent with the Muslims and joined forces with the Quraysh. In their mean and low manner, the Jews sent one of their people to the house of Hassan bin Thabit to check if the women were well-guarded.

Safiyah happened to see him lurking around the site trying to climb over it. She grabbed a plank of wood and struck him to death. The Jews felt that the man's absence was too long, so they sent someone to check up on him and found him drowned in his own blood, which induced them to keep clear of the site, as they thought it was fortified and protected by Muslim fighters. Thus,

Safiyah managed to save the lives of the women and children with her cleverness and courage. No one could imagine what would have happened to the Muslims in siege had their women and children been attacked.

Victory upon victory for the Muslims followed after the Battle of the Trench, until Makkah itself was conquered. But soon after that, the Prophet (peace be upon him) died, which shocked Safiyah greatly. She composed his elegy:

O mine eyes! Shed tears on the noblest
Of all who were buried in the dust,
And with the deep grief of your heart
Cry for Al-Mustafa's death and lament.
To people he was merciful
And for their guidance was the best.
May Allah reward him both in life
And with Paradise after his death.

Safiyah lived until 'Umar's leadership. When she died, 'Umar prayed for her and buried her with the Prophet's Companions in Al-Baqi'.

‘A’ishah bint As-Siddiq

‘A’ishah belonged to a prestigious family in the tribe of Quraysh named Banu Taym. The members of this family were known for their generosity, good manners, and good treatment of women.

The families lived in a realm of love and peace. The most outstanding member of Banu Taym was Abu Bakr bin Abi Quhafa, ‘A’ishah’s father. He was a well-to-do merchant who was kind and easy to talk to. His acquaintance with the people of Quraysh extended to all of them, and his knowledge of the tribe’s history and that of other tribes, as well as poetry and genealogy, was profound. Abu Bakr’s wisdom led him to respond quickly to his friend Muhammad’s call for Islam. He did not hesitate to believe in the new religion or to do his best to support it.

Before the revelation came, Abu Bakr was an honorable man. After it, and having believed in it, his honorability only multiplied, as he was the second man in the Muslim community and was later elected for his trustworthiness as the caliph after the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Abu Bakr was married to a woman named Umm Ruman, who belonged to the tribe of Kinanah. She was also of good manners and sincere in her faith like her husband. The Prophet (peace be upon him) made reference to her when he said, "Whoever is pleased to see one of the maidens of Paradise (houri), let him look at Umm Ruman."

It was with the cherishing nature of such great parents that 'A'ishah was brought up. She was more privileged than others because when she was born, her parents were already Muslim. From the time she first opened her eyes she saw her parents praying and working in *da'wah*. When she could first hear, she heard the voices of her parents reading Qur'an. Her father recited Qur'an in such a touching manner that he or his listener would be induced to cry. The Quraysh were afraid lest his recitation

should impress people, so they endeavored to stop him from reading aloud.

Abu Bakr's family was honored by the Prophet's frequent visits. He (peace be upon him) used to visit Abu Bakr daily to discuss the issues of *da'wah* while 'A'ishah would watch and listen. It was precisely the way her parents showed respect and reverence to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that nurtured a deep love and respect for him in her heart.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also showed a notable interest in 'A'ishah, as he saw signs of intelligence in her from her early days. He often said to her mother, "Take good care of 'A'ishah, Umm Ruman."

Those brief words showed his admiration of 'A'ishah.

Allah blessed that amiable child by having her brought up in a home of the Quraysh, full of honor and culture that was the second household to embrace Islam after the Prophet's. But she was endowed with a nobler status when she was chosen by Allah to be the wife of His

Prophet while she was still a child. Thus, her life was set as an example for Muslim families.

The life of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was like an open book in which no secret was kept from any of the Muslims. He was the ideal example to follow. Even in the most intricate details of his life they followed him in worship, jihad, social and family affairs, and other aspects. Consequently, his life with 'A'ishah was for the knowledge of everybody.

The first lesson was the marriage. She married the Prophet (peace be upon him), the noblest of nobles, yet in a very humble house, if it could even be called that. It was a single room built of unbaked bricks and palm leaves, with a leather curtain for a door. The furniture was made of leather stuffed with felt and placed on a rug. That was the house of the bride who was the Mother of the Faithful and the wife of the last Messenger; a house of unbaked bricks, palm leaves, and leather bedding stuffed with felt! In fact, Allah directed His Messenger to such a humble life.

'A'ishah received a very humble dower of five hundred dirhams despite her noble origin, distinguished beauty, and manners. But that humble dower was merely symbolic. It was not from an ordinary man to an ordinary woman but from the noblest of all humanity and Allah's Messenger to the daughter of an outstanding rich man of Banu Taym and Quraysh.

Why don't men and women of today follow that example of the great Messenger to all people? Why should they exaggerate the dower to such an extent that it hinders young men from marriage or at least delays it till they are financially capable. Marriage has now become like a tax, the colossal rates of dowers resulting in a higher rate of young, unmarried women, which will sooner or later lead society to moral chaos.

Don't we have a more fitting example in the Messenger of Allah? So, why don't we follow it? The Muslim society has suffered as a result of this behavior. When will there be good men and women to reconsider this incongruous habit?

So, how was the wedding party of this noble woman and the Messenger of all humanity? 'A'ishah herself related the events of that day:

> Neither a camel nor a sheep was slaughtered for my wedding until Sa'd bin 'Ubadah sent us the dish that he was in the habit of sending to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)

Thus, no camels or sheep were slaughtered especially for the bride. The only fare available was the usual bowl of food that one of the Companions used to present to the Prophet (peace be upon him) every day. The meal was basic. Such simplicity in the wedding and dower should really be an example for us to follow.

The family is the cornerstone of the compassionate Muslim society. But as we can see, modern and alien marriage customs can be a real threat to the making of families.

Although 'A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) was the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the daughter of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq and Umm Ruman,

who was described as the maiden of Paradise, she still had feelings of jealousy shared by all women. She loved her husband and, in her jealous manner, hated him thinking of any of his other wives. Many accounts of ‘A’ishah’s jealousy can be traced in her biography.

Allah permitted ‘A’ishah’s life to be an open book for men to learn how to treat their wives and be patient with their shortcomings. This is taking into consideration that ‘A’ishah was higher in morality than any other woman.

We are not going to relate examples of her jealousy of the co-wives who lived in the adjoining rooms, but we will mention her jealousy of the wife she never saw, namely Khadijah.

His love for Khadijah caused the Prophet (peace be upon him) to always speak in her favor and be generous to her friends in honor of her memory. Even many years after her death, he still held the same love and respect for her. But this set ‘A’ishah’s heart on fire, and one day she lost her self-control and said to him, “What makes you remember one of the old women of the Quraysh with a

toothless mouth of red gums who died long ago, and in whose place Allah has given you someone better than her?" (Bukhari, 1575).

She loved her husband and was not to blame for her jealousy, as she had an unrivalled man. But still, her words angered the Prophet (peace be upon him), who replied, "No, by Allah, Allah has not given me one better in her place. She believed in me when people belied me. She comforted me with her money when people deprived me, and from her alone I had children."

Although 'A'ishah regretted her behavior towards the memory of Khadijah, her jealousy was unrelenting. Therefore, men should not blame women for having this jealous trait in them.

During her life in the Prophet's house, she watched him, listened to him, and accompanied him in the battlefields. Everything she saw and heard was understood in the fullest sense and deepened her knowledge in religion.

'A'ishah lived a long time after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). She was an authority to all those Muslims who sought knowledge in many issues of their religion.

Her knowledgeable manner benefited all those around her and the number of hadiths she narrated from the Prophet (peace be upon him) exceeded those of all the other Mothers of the Faithful.

Imam Az-Zahri said concerning her, "If 'A'ishah's knowledge of religion is compared to the knowledge of all the Prophet's wives as well as the knowledge of some women in the world, it will be greater." Her knowledge was not confined to hadith; it extended to poetry and medicine. Abu Hisham bin 'Urwa narrated from his father, "I have never seen anyone more knowledgeable in jurisprudence, medicine, and poetry than 'A'ishah."

Her house became a destination for students to acquire knowledge and convey it to the different cities. May Allah be pleased with her and have mercy on her, as she faithfully kept the trust of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Hafsah bint Al-Faruq

The heavens bear witness to the constant praying and fasting of Hafsah.

Her husband, Khunays bin Hudhayfah As-Sahmi, died when she was only eighteen, which upset her father, 'Umar bin Al-Khattab.

He wanted her to lead a secure life with a good husband, so he thought of 'Uthman bin 'Affan as the best choice because he was one of the prominent figures in the Quraysh, and their men were known for their good nature and high moral values. 'Uthman was a close friend of 'Umar, and his wife Ruqayah—the Prophet's daughter—had died. Having thought over the matter, 'Umar decided to approach 'Uthman about it. He went to him and asked, "Would you like to take Hafsah for your wife?"

'Uthman paused to think and answered, "Give me time, 'Umar, to think it over."

'Umar left quite sure of his friend's desire to be related to him due to his closeness to the Prophet. But a few days later, 'Uthman apologized to 'Umar for his lack of interest in the marriage. 'Umar, offended by 'Uthman's refusal, decided to make this offer to Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, but again he got no reply.

'Umar was trying to select a pious husband for his daughter and was shocked by his friends' refusal, so he hurried to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to complain about it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) answered 'Umar in a way that relaxed him. He (peace be upon him) said smiling, "Someone better than 'Uthman will marry Hafsah, and someone better than Hafsah will marry 'Uthman."

'Umar rejoiced at the news of his daughter's marriage to the Prophet and her subsequent title "Mother of the Faithful". When he carried the news to his family, the whole house was overwhelmed with happiness.

Although 'Umar was a chieftain of the tribe before and after Islam, he was not embarrassed to search for a husband for his widowed daughter. He was not shy to ask whoever was suitable to marry her.

Is there any father nowadays who prefers to follow 'Umar's example? Of course not. Fathers find it awkward to find good husbands for their daughters, but they don't consider it awkward to allow them outdoors uncovered. Such an attitude from parents has resulted in the increasing number of unmarried women.

Dear parents, follow the example of 'Umar, because he typifies the Islamic way of choosing husbands. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said in this respect, "If one whose religious state and manners you approve of comes to ask your daughter for marriage, accept him."

If we fail to do so, the society will be full of unmarried women.

Hafsah joined the household of the Prophet (peace be upon him). She was the third after 'A'ishah and Sawdah, and after her, other wives came to the house. The

natural jealousy that is felt by co-wives was also felt by the Prophet's wives. 'A'ishah and Hafsah used to be on opposing sides. The Prophet's reaction towards this was always marked with patience and forgiveness. But when any of them transgressed the limits, he was firm in handling such behavior.

Once Hafsah disclosed one of Prophet's (peace be upon him) secrets. He was firm enough to divorce her. 'Umar was deeply hurt, as he was very proud of this kinship with the Prophet. He blamed himself saying, "Allah will not look at 'Umar and his daughter anymore." But this tragic situation did not last long, as Allah commanded His Messenger to take her back when Gabriel descended to him with the message, "Take Hafsah back because she is a woman who constantly fasts and prays all night. She will be your wife in Paradise."

The joy of both Hafsah and her father was tremendous. In general, we should not cast any blame on the wives of the best of the sons of Adam for competing to win his heart, especially that this human nature in them never conflicted with their piety and steadfastness in the teachings of Allah and His Messenger.

The house of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a house of prophethood and knowledge. All his wives were keen to learn Qur'an from him, and they all narrated hadiths from him with full understanding. They inquired, discussed, and sometimes tried to correct him and have their own opinions concerning the meaning of the Qur'an. But the Prophet (peace be upon him) was very open-minded in directing and instructing them, because his own household was to be an example to all other households.

It was narrated that while the Prophet (peace be upon him) was with Hafsah, he mentioned that his Companions who had taken the pledge of allegiance under the tree at the Treaty of Hudaybiyah were given the good tidings of salvation from Hellfire. He said, "The people of the tree who took the pledge under it will not enter Hellfire if Allah wills." Thereupon, Hafsah remembered a verse from the Qur'an which she understood to be contradictory to what the Prophet had said. She could have kept silent, but she corrected him by saying, "No, Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) frowned at her, but she insisted to go on reciting from the Qur'an:

❴Not one of you but will pass over it: this is, with thy Lord, a decree which must be accomplished.❵

(Maryam, 71)

But he (peace be upon him) corrected her by completing the rest of the sentence contained in the next verse:

❴But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrong doers-therein, (humbled) to their knees❵

(Maryam, 72)

This argument was a lesson to a student who had thought herself in the right but had discovered a new interpretation. She was humble enough to admit her mistake afterwards. The same verse was interpreted by Ibn `Abbas when he said, "The one who passes by the water spring does not necessarily drink from it. All creatures will pass by Hell. The saved pass by it because Allah wants them to see what they have been saved from, but the evil people will fall in it on their knees."

Hafsah lived through the great moments of revelation and the triumph of Islam over the banners of unbelief. She also lived through the sad moment of the

Prophet's death. Abu Bakr succeeded the Prophet (peace be upon him) and took the responsibility of caring for and honoring the Mothers of the Faithful.

Soon after his appointment, the wars of apostasy started, and many Muslims were killed. This inspired Abu Bakr to compile the Qur'an into one book. He collected it from the fragmented papers and pieces of leather, and after finishing the task, he searched for a secure place and a trustworthy person for its safekeeping.

Hafsah was that person. Keeping the book of guidance for all humanity in her house was not only Hafsah's honor but also the honor of all Muslim women from the time of the Prophet until the Day of Judgment. She kept that valuable trust for ten years. It was then that the third caliph, 'Uthman bin 'Affan, took it back to copy and distribute it to the different cities. Most of Hafsah's time was spent in praying and fasting till she passed away and was reunited with her loving husband in the world of eternity.

Umm Salamah bint Zad Ar-Rakb

Her name was Hind but she was known as Umm Salamah (Mother of Salamah). Her father, Abu Umayah Suhayl bin Al-Mughirah Al-Makhzumi was a prominent figure of the Quraysh known for his generosity. His family used to call him Zad Ar-Rakb, which means "The Provision of the Travelers", because when he went on any journey he insisted on providing for all his fellow travelers, refusing to allow anyone to share with him in the cost or responsibility. Her mother was 'Atikah bint 'Amir from the tribe of Kinanah. Her grandfather, 'Alqamah, was called Jadhl At-Ta'an, which means "The Spear Thrower", for his unparalleled excellency in chivalry and duels.

Umm Salamah belonged to the clan of Banu Makhzum, one of the three most honorable clans branching from the tribe of the Quraysh. The others were

Banu Hashim and Banu Umayah. There was continuous hatred by the Makhzum clan towards Banu 'Abd Manaf, the two other clans with a common grandfather, as Banu Makhzum thought they had more right to the leadership of the Quraysh. Such tribal zeal made Banu Makhzum deeply hostile towards Islam, as the Prophet belonged to the competing clan of 'Abd Manaf.

The enemy of Allah, Abu Jahl Al-Makhzumi, justified this hostility when he was once asked to give his opinion of Muhammad's prophethood:

> What do I say about this? Both our clan and the clan of 'Abd Manaf were competing to attain leadership. When they fed people, we did the same; when they helped people, we did the same; and when they gave people money, we did the same till we became on equal footing, like two horses in a race. But when they said, "We have among us a Prophet who receives revelation from the heavens," we said, "We cannot have the same. By Allah, we will never believe him or have any faith in him."

The competition between the two clans intensified, and the hostility held by Banu Makhzum towards the call for Islam got more bitter as they carried the banner of resistance to the new religion under the power of Abu Jahl. The Prophet (peace be upon him) called him "The Pharaoh of this *Ummah*" and the Muslims called him Abu Jahl, which means "The Man of Ignorance".

This fanatic strife did not stop one of the men of Makhzum, Abu Salamah 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul Asad Al-Makzumi, a man of wisdom, from embracing the new faith after realizing that Muhammad was on the right road. His wife Umm Salamah was also wise enough to believe in the message of Muhammad (peace be upon him). As a result, the couple suffered terribly from their people, who tortured and abandoned Abu Salamah.

But the torture of the believers had become unbearable, so the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded them to emigrate from Makkah to Abyssinia, and Abu Salamah and Umm Salamah were among the first emigrants.

The Muslims were blockaded and boycotted in the narrow pass of Abu Talib for three years. When the news of the blockade reached the Muslims in Abyssinia, they supplicated to Allah for their brothers and sisters in Makkah. Many of the emigrants returned, including Umm Salamah, on hearing that the boycott was over. But they were mistaken to think that the Quraysh had softened towards the Muslims.

The treatment was as bad as—if not worse than—before, so much so that they were plotting to assassinate the Prophet (peace be upon him). It was at this point in time that Allah commanded His Messenger to emigrate to Madinah. Abu Salamah and Umm Salama were the first Muslims to respond to that command.

The story of the small family's migration is a tragedy that reveals the cruelty and heartlessness of the pagans, the enemies of Allah and His Messenger. Abu Salamah had only just set out on his journey to Madinah with his wife and son, Salamah, when a band of the Makhzum pagans approached him asking, "Where are you going, Abu Salamah?"

"I'm leaving this land of oppression to my brothers in Madinah."

The pagans replied, "You are free to do whatever you like, but your wife is different. She belongs to us and we won't let her wander with you in strange lands."

Compassion was not the essence of Banu Makhzum's interest in Umm Salamah after she had converted; it was only their stubbornness and hostility towards Islam. On hearing about Abu Salamah's ordeal, his family hurried to support him to face his wife's family.

They said to them, "Don't dare touch the man!" For the sake of tribal zeal, and not for the welfare of the couple, the two parties began to wrestle. The struggle became fiercer and then one of Banu Makhzum shouted, "By Allah, we won't let Abu Salamah take our relative with him. He either leaves her behind or we will take her back by force." Before anyone could answer, they hastened to Umm Salamah's camel and took its rein from her husband's hand. Such an act drove Banu 'Abdul Asad, Abu Salamah's people, furious and they said, "If you want to take your relative, take her, we have no need for her. It's

her son who belongs to us, and we won't leave him to you."

Banu 'Abdul Asad snatched the child from his mother's arms. In return Banu Makhzum, the child's maternal uncles, refused to be defeated by the paternal uncles, and so they tried to grab the child. The two parties kept pulling him by his two arms, ignoring his and his mother's cries. Heartless and cruel, unrelenting in their zeal, they only let go when the child's little hand was torn off. Banu 'Abdul Asad took the child, while Banu Makhzim took his hand and mother with them.

Abu Salamah continued on his way, deeply hurt and forlorn at leaving his wife and son behind. He was relieved to reach Madinah and set about asking for the news of his child and wife.

Banu Makhzum had no interest in Umm Salamah but took her to show their pride and mastery. Similarly, Banu 'Abdul Asad had no concern for the little boy except as a tool of revenge on the other family. A whole year passed with Umm Salamah pained at her separation from her son and her husband. This moved some of her kind

friends, and they subsequently negotiated with their kinsmen to allow her to reunite with Abu Salamah. Banu 'Abdul Asad were also approached. At last, both missions succeeded, and their family become one again after a whole year of suffering for the sake of Allah.

The Islamic state was established, and the Prophet (peace be upon him), together with his Companions, waged many battles and campaigns as jihad. Abu Salamah was part of this jihad, while Umm Salamah spent all her time in educating her children on the principles of the new faith. She was kind-hearted towards her husband and prepared all the means of a comfortable life for him on his return from battle. They were happily married and very much in love.

One day, after he had returned from the battlefield, they had a discussion. She said to him, "I've heard that if a woman's husband dies and enters Paradise and she doesn't marry after his death and also enters Paradise, then she will be his wife in Paradise. And the same happens to him if his wife dies and he does not remarry after her. Let us take a solemn vow that you will not marry after my death and I will not marry after your death."

He looked at his loving wife and said, "Will you obey me, Umm Salamah?"

She said, "Whenever you ask for anything, I always wish to obey you."

He said, "Then remarry after my death." He paused for a moment and prayed, "Oh Allah, bless Umm Salamah after my death with a better husband who never hurts or vexes her."

Hearing this, Umm Salamah wished him a long life.

On the day of Uhud, Abu Salamah was seriously wounded, but his wound healed and he continued to perform jihad. Some time later, the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered him to lead an army to invade Banu Asad, who were planning to attack Madinah.

Abu Salamah executed this mission and returned victoriously. When he entered his home, he was received warmly by his wife. Noticing that he was feeble, she asked

about his weakness. He told her that it was from the wound of Uhud.

Sensing that death was near, Abu Salamah said to his wife, "I heard the Prophet say, 'If a disaster befalls any of you, you should say: We belong to Allah and to Him we return. O Allah, reward me for having such a disaster and bless me with something better instead of it.' O Umm Salamah, if I die, hold fast to that *du'a'*."

He shut his eyes and murmured, "O Allah, bestow upon my family all that is good after I die," then passed away.

Umm Salamah cried. She gathered her children and recited, "To Allah we belong and to Him we return. O Allah, reward me for having such a disaster…"

When she tried to continue, she couldn't, but could only ask herself, "Who is better than Abu Salamah?" But she remembered that it had been her husband's will to recite the whole *du'a'*, and she did. "… and give me something better in its place."

The ideal Muslim society that existed in Madinah at that time would not permit a lonely widow to struggle in life alone with her children. When this happened everyone hurried to her support.

After Umm Salamah had finished her '*idda* [a period of time after the husband's death during which the widow cannot remarry], Abu Bakr proposed to her, but she refused him. Then 'Umar proposed to her, and again she refused. It was only after the Prophet himself (peace be upon him) sent a messenger to propose for him that she responded.

To that she answered, "Welcome, Messenger of Allah and welcome, messenger of the Messenger of Allah. Go and tell the Prophet of Allah that I have three characteristics with which I should not marry the Prophet (peace be upon him). I am an old woman, I am responsible for fatherless children, and I am a very jealous woman."

Hearing this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent her another message: "As for being an old woman, I am older than you, and it is not usual that a woman marries one older than herself. As for being the mother of

orphaned children, Allah and His Messenger will sustain them. And as for your jealous nature, I will pray to Allah to remove this from you."

Thus, Umm Salamah was married to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Allah gave her someone better in the place of Abu Salamah. Umm Salamah continued to strive in jihad but this time with the Prophet (peace be upon him). She accompanied him in all his battles, offering him the comfort and peace of mind he needed in order to accomplish his holy mission. It was a mission rooting out the age-old ignorance and planting instead of it the seeds of justice and righteousness of Islam.

Umm Salamah attended the Battle Hudaybiyah with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and witnessed the long negotiations between him (peace be upon him) and the delegates from the Quraysh in an attempt to prevent the formidable war. After long talks, both the Muslims and the Quraysh agreed to sign a peace accord, but many of the Muslims considered such an agreement to be unfair to the Muslims.

This view was amplified by ‘Umar bin Al-Khattab, who exclaimed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), “Aren’t you truly the Prophet of Allah?”

“Yes,” replied the Prophet.

‘Umar continued, “Aren’t we in the right and our enemies are in the wrong?”

“Yes.”

“Then why should we suffer humiliation in the matter of faith?”

The Prophet replied, “I am the true Messenger of Allah. I never disobey Him, and He will help me.” After that, Muhammad (peace be upon him) ordered his Companions to slaughter the sacrifices for the cancelled `Umrah and share them out. He ordered them to do this three times, but no one responded, even though he told them that his command was a command from Heaven.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was upset by his Companions’ disobedience, so he went to Umm Salamah to complain to her, but she advised him wisely, “O Prophet

of Allah, if you like to take my words, go out but do not speak to any of them. Slaughter your camel and call for your barber to shave your head."

In this way Umm Salamah's consultation solved a serious problem. She already knew that the disobedience of the Companions was out of pure love and enthusiasm for their faith, as they felt that the terms of the treaty were humiliating to their religion. She also knew that they were always ready to follow the Prophet (peace be upon him).

For her deep faith and love to her husband and her advice that saved the Muslims, Allah made her a Mother of Faithful. May Allah be pleased with her.

Umm Habibah bint Abu Sufyan

Ramlah, known as Umm Habibah (Mother of Habibah), was the daughter of Abu Sufyan, one of the most powerful chieftains in Makkah whom even the powerful listened to and obeyed.

At the onset of the Islamic *da'wah*, Abu Sufyan was its first challenger due to his jealousy of prophethood being bestowed upon someone outside his family, Banu 'Abd Shams. Therefore, he was the leader of the army of unbelievers against Islam. It was in this patriarchal society, where women were the subjects and unquestioned followers of men, that Umm Habibah, daughter of Abu Sufyan, rose to declare her faith in what had been revealed to Muhammad (peace be upon him).

She was a woman of independent thought and open-minded. She was married to 'Ubaydullah bin Jahsh, who before the advent of Islam had abandoned paganism for Christianity.

Some claimed that Umm Habibah converted to Islam just to follow her husband, as dictated by the social mores of tribal society at that time. The following incidents only prove the contrary.

Suffering and .oppression were the outcome of the Makkan sanctions, and hence the Prophet (peace be upon him) directed the Muslims to immigrate to Abyssinia. 'Ubaydullah bin Jahsh and his wife Umm Habibah were among them. Tired of the continuous suffering at the hands of their enemies, 'Ubaydullah decided to revert to Christianity after he had met the Christians of Abyssinia and seen the luxury they were accustomed to. He urged his wife to follow him in his apostasy from Islam. "Umm Habibah, I have reverted to Christianity. Why don't you do the same?"

Umm Habibah said in terror, "By Allah, it is not good for you, 'Ubaydullah!" She tried to stop him but to

no avail. He took to drinking alcohol, which eventually killed him. This sad event is evidence that her belief was her own personal choice and not on the pretext that she was following others.

Her husband's apostasy was a shock, leaving her with a little daughter, Habibah, and no one to support her. Despite the consolation she received from her Muslim brothers and sisters, she felt insecure, having lost both her father and her husband.

The news of this tragedy reached the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Madinah, and he hastened to support her. His messenger, 'Amr bin Umayah Ad-Damri journeyed to the Negus, the Emperor of Abyssinia, to carry out the marriage procedures between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Umm Habibah. The Negus sent one of his female slaves to Umm Habibah with the news. Relieved in just a moment from the heavy burden that weighed down her heart, she rejoiced at the proposal, and so did the Muslims when the Negus informed them. The happiest of them all was Umm Habibah's cousin, Khalid bin Sa'id bin Al-'As, who contracted the procedure himself in the emperor's palace because such a marriage only made him

closer in kin to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Umm Habibah, who was now blessed with the best husband in place of her apostate one who had died, remained in Abyssinia with the rest of the Muslims waiting for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to permit them to migrate once more to Madinah.

At last the permission came and they hurried with great joy to the Negus to bid him farewell. When they arrived at Madinah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was celebrating the victory over the Jews in Khaybar and on sighting them, he said, "By Allah, I don't know which is more pleasing to my heart, the victory of Khaybar or the coming of Ja'far." That group of immigrants was renowned for making two *Hijras* (migrations). Umm Habibah herself was entitled "Dhat Al-Hijratayn" which means "The Woman of the Two Migrations".

Umm Habibah led a happy life in the Prophet's household with nothing to upset her except her father's reluctance to follow the path of Islam. His stubbornness was at the crutch of his refusal, but she had hope for him because she believed he was a wise man. Her wishful desire extended till the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiyah, when she

saw it as a chance for her father to reconsider his own welfare and that of his tribe, the Quraysh.

But the Quraysh broke that covenant with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he (peace be upon him) promptly decided, as a result of this, to conquer Makkah for the sake of Islam. The striking news spread all over the peninsula, and the Quraysh trembled at the formidable revenge for their act. They concurred to tell the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they were willing to keep the treaty and were also willing to extend it.

They chose one whom they deemed as the best to go on this mission, Abu Sufyan, because of his kinship with the Prophet. The custom was that Abu Sufyan would stay in his daughter's house during his visit. He intended to speak to her about interceding with the Prophet (peace be upon him) on behalf of the Quraysh.

When Abu Sufyan arrived at Madinah, he noticed that it was different than before. There was a certain hustle and bustle about the place that was in stark contrast to the stillness of the past. Even the inhabitants looked more

serious and confident compared to the gloomy faces of Makkah.

The Mother of the Faithful was surprised to see her father but was silent. Abu Sufyan thought that it was because he had surprised his daughter that she did not invite him in. He stepped into the house and was about to sit on the Prophet's bedding when Umm Habibah folded the bedclothes quickly. This puzzled him somewhat, so he asked her to explain. "Did you fold the bedspread away from me? Is it because I am not fit for it or because it is not fit for me?"

She answered him confidently, "It is the bed of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and you are nothing but an impure idolater."

Abu Sufyan was startled to hear his daughter speak in such a manner when he, a man of great status, was sure that all the Arab households dreamed to receive him as a guest and place under him the most luxurious cushions. He asked himself why his daughter had done that. She must have gone crazy!

He shouted at her, "You must have gone crazy after you left me!"

But she repeated insistently, "It is the bed of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and you are nothing but an impure idolater."

At that point he gave up any idea of asking for her intercession. He went to Abu Bakr, then to 'Umar, then to 'Ali for the same purpose, but they all sent him back. His mission was a failure.

A few weeks later Makkah was conquered by Islam and every nook and corner was shaken with the sound of "Allahu Akbar," "Allah is Greater."

It was on that day that Abu Sufyan declared his belief in Islam. The heart of Umm Habibah calmed. Only then was she fully satisfied.

Umm Habibah lived to a very old age. On her deathbed, she called for 'A'ishah and said to her, "There was between us what is normally between co-wives. May Allah forgive us for that."

'A'ishah answered, "May Allah have mercy on you and forgive you for that."

Umm Habibah was comforted and said, "You have pleased me. May Allah please you." She said the same to Umm Salamah, and the latter answered in the same way.

This is the story of a believing Muslim woman who declared her faith while her father was the leader of pagans. She held fast to her faith when her husband became an apostate. She went through two *hijrahs*, one to Abyssinia and the other to Madinah. She never lost her faith, even in the most delicate and trying moments like when she saw her father after a long separation.

She desired to return Allah wholly purified from anything that would stain her faith, so she asked her co-wives to forgive her and they did. May Allah have mercy on Umm Habibah, Mother of the Faithful.

Zaynab bint Jahsh:

The Qur'anic Woman

Zaynab bint Jahsh Al-Asadiyh Al-Madariyah was one of the Makkan elite. Her mother was Umaymah bint 'Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's paternal aunt, making her the Prophet's cousin. Zaynab embraced Islam together with her family at an early stage and were all active in their Islamic way of life.

Zaynab and other members of her family immigrated to Madinah when she was a marriageable age. Her prominent Makkan youthfulness blossomed, and there were many marriage proposals due to her nobility and outstanding beauty.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) had a young servant close to his heart named Zayd bin Harithah. As soon as they had they settled in Madinah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) searched for a suitable wife for him and found the right qualities in Zaynab. There was a lot of

criticism concerning this marriage. It was not acceptable for a high class young lady of noble birth and, moreover, the Prophet's cousin, to marry a servant. It was a paradigm they had neither witnessed in the Days of Ignorance (*jahiliyah*) nor after the advent of Islam.

The change of social mores was a positive result of the catalyst of the Islamic way of life, as it replaced the old customs with newer ones.

But Zaynab's reaction to the choice only fitted with her traditional society. She was too proud to accept Zayd as a husband, and her brother, 'Abdullah bin Jahsh, also objected to the union.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) talked to her about his own love for Zayd because of his sincere faith. But Zaynab replied, "O Messenger of Allah, I cannot accept him because of the high position I hold in the Quraysh." To this the Prophet said, "I have accepted him to be your husband." Then a command from the heavens was revealed on that occasion saying:

❴It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by God and His Apostle, to have any option about their decision. If anyone disobeys God and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path❵

(Al-Ahzab, 36)

Zaynab, the one of noble birth, submitted with all her family to the command. Everyone knew it was a marriage dictated by Heaven.

This marriage was recorded in history as a precedent. It established a basic principle in Islam that humanity had not known before: equality between human beings and that piety is the only criterion that raises one above another. It seemed strange that such a new principle emerged in a society that had strictly adhered to class distinction. Thus, it was a great honor to Zaynab bint Jahsh to be instrumental in that social revolution.

Zaynab married Zayd bin Harithah, who had formerly been named Zayd bin Muhammad, as he was an adopted son of the Prophet (peace be upon him). But the couple found their marriage a strain. It was clear to Zayd

from the very beginning that Zaynab had married him only in submission to the command of Allah and His Messenger, that she had been forced to accept him. Feeling that his wife did not love him, he decided to terminate the marriage.

Every time Zayd talked to the Prophet about his decision, the Prophet (peace be upon him) answered, "Hold on to your wife. Allah bestowed on that pious lady a great blessing to reward her for her piety." Allah revealed to His Messenger that He had chosen Zaynab to be the Prophet's wife. He (peace be upon him) dared not disobey Allah's order, but at the same time he could not tell anyone.

He kept this secret close in his heart until Zayd finally divorced Zaynab. People started to gossip about the father who wanted marry his son's ex-wife, especially since at that time Zayd was still called Zayd bin Muhammad. Soon, however, the revelation descended upon the Prophet declaring a new legal principle, saying that the adopted son is different from the natural son. No man should claim paternity of anyone except the real father. Therefore, Zayd was once again called Zayd bin

Harithah, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) married Zaynab bint Jahsh.

Allah revealed to the Prophet:

❮Behold! thou didst say to one who had received the grace of god and thy favour: "Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife and fear God." But thou didst hide in thy heart that which God was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear God. Then when Zayd had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), We joined her in marriage to thee: in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (their marriage) with them. And God's command must be fulfilled.❯

(Al-Ahzab, 37)

This heavenly decree made Zaynab's life part of the Qur'an for people to read day and night and follow as an ideal example. Such an honor was a matter of pride for Zaynab. She once said to the Prophet (peace be upon him)

in a boastful manner, "O Messenger of Allah! I am not like the rest of your wives. All of them married you through their fathers, brothers, or even their relatives, but I married you by a heavenly decree from Allah." She often proudly claimed to her co-wives, "It was your families who gave you in marriage to your husband, but it was Allah Who gave me in marriage to him from above the seven heavens."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered a lamb to be served in celebration of the wedding. Being the first time the Prophet offered a sheep at his wedding celebration, it was spoken about with great enthusiasm by the whole town.

Comparing that single sacrifice which was a banquet of a nobleman, to the extravaganzas of today, the latter will seem incredible. It was said that a certain Muslim spent millions of dinars on his wedding feast, then he threw all the leftovers in the sea. How can we expect Allah to be generous to us when this happens, and millions are starving to death?

The Prophet (peace be upon him) invited all the people in the mosque to his wedding feast, then all the people of Madinah to eat after them. By the blessing of Allah, the food was sufficient for all of them. After everyone had eaten, no one seemed ready to leave and in their enjoyment they stayed till very late. It was on that occasion that Allah revealed the following to teach the Muslims not to invade the Prophet's privacy:

﴾O ye who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses,— until leave is given you,— for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter; and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but God is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that ye should annoy God's Apostle, or that ye should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in God's sight an enormity.﴿

(Al-Ahzab, 53)

This verse teaches people some rules in etiquette and decorum. In addition, it obligated *hijab* on Muslim women.

It is a great privilege to Zaynab to have such recurrent associations with the holy text. Her marriage to Zayd was decreed by Heaven, and so was her marriage to the Prophet (peace be upon him). It was on the occasion of her marriage that the important social manners were clarified, and the heavenly order for *hijab* was revealed in her house and on the occasion of her marriage. In fact, it was due to her entire submission to the commands of Allah that she was worthy of such glory.

Zaynab lived in the house of the Prophet (peace be upon him), where she was devoted in worship most of her time. She did not involve herself in the endless competition between her co-wives to win the Prophet's heart. She had enough confidence in her faith and beauty not to harbor any feelings of jealousy.

Besides worshiping, Zaynab spent the rest of her time looking after the poor and needy. She was skilled at tanning skins and piercing pearls, which she sold and gave all the profits to the poor.

All women should take Zaynab as a model. The noble high-born woman of Makkah sold her own handiwork to sustain the poor and needy. Now, the modern woman is too lazy to care for her duties and even her own children, whom she leaves with foreign nannies, alien in language, culture, and religion.

Zaynab, like all her co-wives, was keen to follow the Prophet (peace be upon him) before and after his death. 'A'ishah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to his wives, "The one of you with the longest arm will be the first one to follow me to my grave."

After his death, all the wives measured their arms to see who had the longest, as each one was willing to be the first to follow the Prophet in his grave. But Zaynab realized that his words were purely metaphorical: the length signified the extent of charity and help towards others. Zaynab was the most charitable among them, and

she was the first one to die after her husband. ‘A’ishah said of her, “She was a woman to be missed, a refuge for widows and orphans.”

All women are invited to be like Zaynab in her manners, worship, and benevolence.

Asma': The Lady of the Two Girdles

At the dawn of the Islamic call, some of the families of Makkah devoted all their members in the way of jihad and *da'wah*. The first of such families was the Prophet's. His wife, Khadijah, and his daughters embraced and supported it from the first moment. The second family was that of Abu Bakr, who believed as soon as the Prophet (peace be upon him) had told him about it. His wife, sons, and daughters all hurried to declare their faith and support Islam. The third family was that of Yasir, who were all tortured until the wife and mother, Sumayah, died under torture. She was recorded as the first martyr in the history of Islam. Sumayah's death did not hinder her husband Yasir or her son 'Ammar from continuing the long path of jihad. The fourth family was the Jahsh family, whose members were persecuted for their faith before they were permitted to perform *hijrah*. When they left, the unbeliever

Abu Sufyan took over their home, but they did not lament it, as it was forsaken for the sake of Allah. Each one of those great families had female members who were hailed for their unforgettable efforts in the field of *da'wah* and jihad. Abu Bakr's family presented to Islam both 'A'ishah and Asma' (May Allah be pleased with both of them).

Asma' was strong in faith and jihad. She remained steadfast in situations where most men failed to do so. The greatness of that lady was derived from the greatness of her father, Abu Bakr, who was rich, good-natured, learned, and trustworthy. This paved the way to his submission to Islam in such a quick manner that the Prophet (peace be upon him) praised him by saying, "Everyone whom I invited to Islam hesitated and took time except Abu Bakr. Islam was never doubtful to him and he did not hesitate to adopt it." Not only did he hurry to declare his faith, but he also convinced his wife, sons, and daughters. He was able to convince some of his close friends despite the obstacles the unbelievers put in his way. It was those who responded to him who were the true cornerstone on which Islam was based thereafter.

Asma', the daughter of this great man, was only fourteen when Makkah experienced the magnitude of revelation, and she sensed that her father played a role in it. She approached him and asked about his new-found busy life. After he explained the matter in detail, she accepted it without hesitation and took a solemn pledge to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Asma' was the eighteenth person to embrace Islam. Thus she was considered one of those foremost in faith, an honor indeed. She was active in every field possible in the Muslim society and was one of the first women to marry as a Muslim. Her marriage and family life, together with that of other Muslim families, were significant in the nascent Muslim society.

Most of the outstanding young men of Quraysh hoped to marry her, but because she was a Muslim, she refused to accept any polytheist as a husband while there were believing men in the small Muslim city.

Az-Zubayr bin Al-'Awam approached Abu Bakr to marry Asma'. Abu Bakr accepted him immediately, as he

was one of the Muslim youth who was sincere in faith and willing in sacrifice.

He was the son of a highborn man, Al-'Awam bin Khuwaylid, the brother of Khadijah and the son of Safiyah bint 'Abdul Muttalib, Hamzah's sister and the Prophet's aunt. Az-Zubayr's father died when he was young, so his mother, being keen to bring him up as an ardent champion, was severe with him until he became an outstanding warrior with distinguished moral values.

The new family continued on the path of jihad and *da'wah*. But at that time the Quraysh were so disturbed by the growing success of Islam that the mistreatment and torture only increased. Therefore, Allah commanded His Messenger to emigrate.

Az-Zubayr informed his wife that he was leaving for Madinah. She asked Allah to bless him and prepared the necessary provisions for him. As he left, he was given the happy news of her pregnancy.

It was joyous news for Az-Zubayr, and what excited him most was that the child would be raised as a

Muslim from the moment of his birth. He yearned to reach Madinah and spread the good news to his brothers in Islam. He set off, leaving behind him his pregnant wife in her father's house.

Abu Bakr's family was waiting for the Prophet's instructions till, at last, the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to Abu Bakr's house at an unexpected time and told him, "Tell everyone in the room to leave."

Abu Bakr replied, "There is no one here but my two daughters. What is the matter, Messenger of Allah? Let my parents be sacrificed for you."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "Allah has now permitted me to emigrate."

Abu Bakr said anxiously, "I will accompany you, Messenger of Allah."

The preparations for the journey were handled by Abu Bakr and included two camels. Then he explained the matter to his sons and daughters, emphasizing that it was highly confidential. He assigned each one of them a role in

order to secure the journey. As for his son 'Abdullah, he was responsible for spying on the pagans of Makkah in order to know about their plots against the Prophet (peace be upon him). Asma' was responsible for taking provisions to the Prophet and her father during their stay in their hiding place. Again, he repeated that secrecy was foremost.

Asma's significant role in the success of the emigration was a great honor. This emigration changed the course of events in the history of Islam and turned a new page in the Islamic call that affected, to a large extent, the whole world at that time. This is proof that women can play important roles in the making of important events.

The two refugees, the Prophet and Abu Bakr, settled in the Cave of Thawr. It was there that they waited until the pursuers abandoned their search. During that time 'Abdullah mingled with the Makkans in the morning, as was his habit, so that at night he could go to the cave to apprise the two refugees of the latest situation in Makkah. Asma' was in the company of her brother to give them the daily provisions and any news that she might have heard from the Makkan women. On their way home, the sister

and brother were followed by Abu Bakr's servant, 'Amir bin Fuhajrah, in order to cover their tracks. All was done in secrecy.

After a few days, their opportunity to leave the cave came. They prepared for the wearisome journey and Asma' brought them the necessary provisions. Being at a loss to find a suitable cloth to tie the food and water onto the camel, she tore her girdle into two and tied the food and water with each strip. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw her, he blessed her saying, "May Allah give you two girdles in Paradise in the place of yours now."

Since that time, the appellation has remained with her: Asma' of the Two Girdles, which was like a badge of honor bestowed on her by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Every woman is invited to have a badge of honor similar to the one Asma' got on the day of *hijrah*, especially since today the fields in which Muslim women can prove themselves are numerous.

After hearing this, Asma' returned home to tell her sister about it, as she was overwhelmed with pride and happiness, but before she could do that she heard a violent knock at the door. She opened it to find Abu Jahl with hateful, evil eyes in front of her, and behind him stood some men of the Quraysh. He harshly demanded, "Where is your father, daughter of Abu Bakr?"

She answered, "I don't know where my father is."

Her response drove him mad. He raised his hand and slapped her so severely that her earring broke. His display of boldness like that of a lion against poor Asma' was similar to Habbar's boldness against Zaynab, and only revealed the meanness in Abu Jahl that he would not have dared to show had Abu Bakr been in the house. It also proved the Quraysh were out of their minds in no longer considering the established moral codes. Again, it proved the Muslim women to be as capable fighters and as damaging to polytheism as men.

Abu Jahl left disappointed, and she entered her house victorious. She succeeded in keeping the Prophet's

secret, then stayed at home to await her permission to emigrate.

On his journey, Abu Bakr took all his money with him in order to spend it on the Islamic cause. He left his family penniless but in Allah's guardianship.

Abu Bakr's father, Abu Quhafah, was still an unbeliever and disapproved of his son's spending on preaching the new religion. He wanted him to invest his money in trade or in purchasing slaves. So after his son had left, he went to Asma' and asked after her, saying, "I'm afraid Abu Bakr has left you without money."

Asma's attitude in this situation is worth telling, as she said, "No, Grandfather, he's left us a lot of money." She brought some little stones as small as coins, put them in a purse, covered it with a piece of cloth and placed it in a hole in the wall where Abu Bakr used to keep his money. She then took the old blind man by the hand and guided him to touch the purse saying, "My father has left us a lot of money." Thereupon, the old man said, "That's good. He's left you all this. This is quite sufficient."

Asma' was pre-occupied with what was more important than money or food and drink. She was busy contemplating the Islamic call that was to be spread at the hands of the Prophet, her father, her husband, and the rest of her Muslim brothers and sisters.

Such was an example of a Muslim woman who did not care whether her father had left her money or not. He left her with faith in Allah, trust in Him, and a passion for the new religion. She did not care about being poor in money while she was rich in faith.

As soon as the Prophet (peace be upon him) had settled in Madinah with his brother immigrants, they started to build the first mosque. He commanded Zayd Ibn Harithah and Abu Rafi' to go to Makkah to bring those who were left behind from his family. Abu Bakr sent with them 'Abdullah bin Urayqit to be their guide. The three men reached Makkah in secret and returned back with the Prophet's daughters Fatimah and Umm Kalthum; his wife Sawdah bint Zam'ah; Zayd's wife Umm Ayman and his son Usamah; and Abu Bakr's wife Umm Ruman, his daughters Asma' and 'A'ishah, and his son 'Abdullah. In the same way that Abu Bakr had the honor of emigrating

with the Prophet (peace be upon him), his family was honored to emigrate with the Prophet's family. Asma' herself was proud of this blessed company. She yearned to reach Madinah to see the dawn of the Islamic state and wanted to have her role in the progressive Islamic work.

When she reached it, she found an active society with every one of the Muhajirun (Immigrants) and Ansar (Helpers) doing his or her best in raising high the words of Allah. She also saw the Munafiqum (Hypocrites) who declared their Islam in pretense due to fear of the Muslims, all the while having disbelief in their hearts. There were also the Jews, who were supposed to be the nearest people to the Muslims, but they held bitter animosity towards them instead. Spreading harmful rumors about the Muslims in order to discourage and waylay them was just one of their ploys. The Jews claimed that due to their witchcraft, the Muslims began to worry about the ironic absence of newborns since their settlement there. But soon after this rumor, the news broke out in Madinah that Asma' had given birth to a baby boy.

The Muslims praised Allah for the glad news. The Jews were silent. Asma' was overjoyed to be the first one

to give birth in the new society and to disperse the false rumors of the Jews.

She took her baby to the home of the Prophet (peace be upon him) where he chewed a piece of date and wetted it with his noble saliva and put it in the baby's mouth, a practice called *tahnik*. Then he named him 'Abdullah.

Asma' was kind to her husband, and, as they were very poor, she used to do all the chores by herself without complaining. She said concerning herself:

> When Az-Zubayr married me, he had nothing on this earth, neither money, nor a slave, only his horse. I used to feed his horse, exercise it, plant the seeds and water them, and knead the dough. But I was not good in baking, so the true women of Ansar helped me in this. I also used to carry the palm tree seeds from his land (which was given to him by the Prophet—peace be upon him) on my head for two-thirds of a parasang [three and a half miles].

Asma''s ideal behavior should be an example to our women. She never complained about her husband's poverty Instead, she helped him and spared for him all means of happiness and peace of mind. She made an effort that might be hard enough for a group of women to make all together.

Asma' succeeded in educating her own children in faith and maturity till they became bright stars in the sky of Islam. After 'Abdullah, she had Urwah, Al-Mundhir, Asim, and Al-Muhajir. They were all great leaders. 'Abdullah himself was so known for his piety and devotion that people called him "The Pigeon of the Mosque" for the long time he would spend in it for worship. His brothers were of similar standing. Asma' held fast to the same ideals throughout her life till she died.

Sumayah: The First Martyr

Yasir bin 'Amir Al- 'Ansiy came from Yemen to Makkah with the desire and intention to dwell in it forever by the holy shrine and live happily with a beautiful wife and a small family.

He chose Abu Hudhayfah to be his ally in the new city. It was a decision he was confident of since the man belonged to Banu Makhzum, the outstanding clan in the tribe of Quraysh.

Yasir lived under the protection of Abu Hudhayfah, whom he loved. Afterwards, Abu Hudhayfah offered him to marry his favorite female slave, Sumayah. And so, Yasir married Sumayah bint Khubbat after her master had manumitted her. The Makkan society was

happy for this marriage between one of their good-mannered allies and a respectable former slave.

The offspring from that marriage were two boys named ‘Ammar and ‘Abdullah. The family devoted all its time to rearing them in the typical image of young Quraysh men.

Sumayah gave all her love and care to the two boys till they grew up in the way the parents always dreamed of. ‘Ammar and ‘Abdullah were distinguished among the Quraysh youth for their astuteness and good manners, even though the youth of Quraysh were the most highly esteemed youth of the whole Arab Peninsula for their outstanding moral code. After Abu Hudhayfah’s death, the family passed through a new stage, which it coped with, despite the sorrow.

The news of the revelation struck Makkah like thunder, and from the onset, the family of Makhzum displayed their utmost hatred of the new faith. The chief of the clan was Abul Hakam bin Hisham, known later as Abu Jahl.

The news reached Yasir as well as all the Makkan families. They were well aware of the attitude of their allies, Banu Makhzum, and Abu Jahl towar' · Islam.

Yasir wanted to hear about the new faith from its source, so he met the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) himself in Dar Al-Arqam. He heard with awe what the Prophet had to say and declared his faith in it. Then he hurried to Sumayah, and she, too, submitted after hearing her husband's explanation. Afterwards they discussed with their sons about Islam, and they, in turn, followed their parents' path. The whole family hurried to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and announced their Islam.

Although the Islamic *da'wah* was underground due to the extreme torture of Muslims perpetrated by the Quraysh, some of the early Muslims insisted upon announcing their adoption of Islam. Among them was Yasir, his wife, and his son 'Ammar, and this announcement enraged Banu Makhzum.

The leaders of Banu Makkzum approached the Yasir family and asked, "Oh, our dearest allies, is what we have heard about you true?"

Yasir asked, "What have you heard about us?"

"We have heard that you swore allegiance to Muhammad."

"Yes, we did."

"Don't you know that he insults our idols, degrades our beliefs, and criticizes our ancestors?"

"We know."

"And you followed him despite this?"

"Yes, we believe in Allah and what His Messenger brings."

"Have you ceased to believe in our idols, Al-Lat, Al-'Uzza, and Hubal?"

"Yes, we have ceased to believe in Al-Lat, Al-'Uzza and Hubal."

The Makhzum clansmen then turned to Sumayah to see if she agreed with her husband, and she added, "I

affirm my belief in Allah as my god and Muhammad as His Messenger."

They said, "Then, we will torture you severely."

The family of Yasir cried, "Do whatever you want. By Allah, we will never go back from the right after we have come to know it."

On his saying this, the oppressors immediately grabbed hold of the three of them, chained them, and dragged them to the desert area of Makkah on the hot sand under the burning sun. They whipped and kicked them, but the family did not give in. Their fury was so intense, they stooped low enough to torture an old woman like Sumayah. But the more they tortured her, the stronger her faith grew.

The Muslim community at that time was too weak to be able to offer any help to the family of Yasir, as many of them were Muslim secretly. Even the Prophet himself (peace be upon him) could only help them by his *du`a'*. It relieved the family to hear the Prophet (peace be upon

him) telling them, "Yasir, have patience, Paradise will be yours."

And Paradise was the only thing the Yasir family strove for. This is why the Prophet's promise only gave them a greater power of resistance. At last, the Mahzum chief, Abu Jahl, came and saw the strength in Sumayah. He tried to win her over to his side, but she did not listen. Then he threatened her and waved his spear in her face, but she only smiled sarcastically. Driven mad by her smile, the man moved to stab her in the abdomen, but it slipped from his hand and pierced her in the private parts, killing her.

Thus, Sumayah died a martyr, while Abu Jahl is covered in shame, both in this life and the life to come. The Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed for the Yasir family saying, "Oh Allah, do not admit any one of the family of Yasir to Hellfire."

Sumayah was raised to the presence of Allah where she awaits the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Paradise as he promised her. It is indeed glorious to all Muslim women that the first martyr in Islam was a woman.

Nasibah bint Ka‘b (Umm ‘Imarah)

Nasibah belonged to the family of An-Najjar from the tribe of Khazraj. She was twice married. The first marriage was to Zayd bin ‘Assim, a relative of hers, and she had two boys from him, ‘Abdullah and Habib. Her second marriage was to Ghuziyah bin ‘Amr, another relative, and from him she had two children, a son named Tamim and a daughter named Khawlah. It is likely that her first husband died as an unbeliever, although his sons were among the Prophet’s Companions. Her second husband was also a Companion, and so were his son and daughter.

Nasibah, as well as all her Arab contemporaries, acquired a different personality due to Islam. She matured and developed powerful characteristics. She became an activist and a fighter.

Nasibah bint Ka'b (Umm 'Imarah) is different from and often confused with Nusaybah bint Ka'b (Umm 'Attiyah Al-Ansariyah), another exemplary female Companion. The two are not related.

Nasibah was one of the early Ansar who embraced Islam and gave a pledge to the Prophet in the Greater 'Aqabah Pledge, which was a significant moment in the history of Islam.

That pledge started a new phase in *da'wah*, as it changed the Muslim society from one of mere passive defensiveness characterized by silent patience to one of active defensiveness supported by an armed force. The pledge also raised the Islamic call from the phase of preaching to phase of the building a state. All this justifies the importance of the Greater 'Aqabah Pledge to the extent that many of the Companions considered it to be more important than the Battle of Badr and that those who attended it should be considered higher in rank than those who fought in Badr.

There were seventy-two Muslims who swore allegiance in this pledge, seventy men and two women,

namely Nasiybah bint Ka'b, otherwise known as Umm 'Imarah, and Asma' bint 'Amr, also known as Umm Mani'.

After consultation between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Ansar, they rose to take the oath. Umm 'Imarah narrated the event as follows:

> The men shook hands with the Prophet (peace be upon him) one after the other on the eve of 'Aqabah while Al-'Abbas was holding the Prophet's hand. They all finished except Umm Mani' and me. My husband Ghuziyah bin 'Amr called the Prophet (peace be upon him) and told him, "Messenger of Allah, here are two women who came with us to pledge to you." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "I take their pledge in the same way I take yours except that I don't shake hands with women."

Those Ansar pledged with the Prophet (peace be upon him) to defend him with their swords, and the aspects of the pledge were dictated equally between men and women except for shaking hands, as a woman's pledge need only be verbal.

The Ansar, including Umm 'Imarah, devoted every moment of their lives to fulfill their oath. The following incidents only prove how far she went to do so.

When the Quraysh were defeated in the Battle of Badr, most of their chieftains were killed or captured. But they insisted on revenge and prepared a huge army. That army marched towards Madinah with the sole intention of uprooting Islam.

The Muslims prepared to face the army, and among them was Umm 'Imarah with the preparations for emergency care, in particular water for the soldiers and wound dressings.

As she looked on, she rejoiced at the triumphant Muslims, but her joy diminished when the triumph started to turn into defeat. The archers disobeyed the Prophet's command and left their stations, putting the Muslim army in chaos. Most of the soldiers, with the exception of ten, fled from the vicinity of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

On seeing this, Umm 'Imarah rushed to protect him (peace be upon him), lifting her dress to her waist.

The Prophet ordered one of the deserters to leave his weapon behind. Umm 'Imarah raced to pick up his shield, then screened the Prophet (peace be upon him) with her own body from the oncoming enemy.

Those who remained around the Messenger (peace be upon him) became fewer, but Umm 'Imarah, together with her husband and two sons, remained firm to the last. The situation proved difficult for anyone to tolerate, and only Umm 'Imarah and a few dauntless men could remain staunch.

The very few Companions who were left circled the Prophet (peace be upon him), shielding him with their spears and arrows. 'Abdullah bin Zayd was struck by a sword on his left arm but carried on fighting without a care.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw him bleeding, he ordered him to get his wound dressed. Umm 'Imarah hurried to her son, bandaged his wound, and then told him, "Rise up, son, and beat the enemies."

Hearing this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to her in admiration, "Who can bear what you are bearing, Umm 'Imarah?" Then he pointed at the man who had injured her son and said, "There is the man who struck your son." Umm 'Imarah rushed at him and hit him in the leg. When he fell, she killed him with the help of others. The Prophet (peace be upon him) smiled at this scene and said, "You are burning with zeal, Umm 'Imarah!"

The Companions continued to defend the Prophet (peace be upon him), letting no one come near him. He (peace be upon him) saw 'Abdullah, the son of Umm 'Imarah, beside him and asked him, "Are you 'Abdullah, the son of Umm 'Imarah?"

He answered, "Yes."

The Prophet then told him, "Shoot!" 'Abdullah kept shooting his arrows.

One of the unbelievers, Ibn Qami'ah rushed towards the Messenger of Allah and shouted, "Where is Muhammad? Show us where he is. By Allah, if I don't kill him, I have no hope of living." Umm 'Imarah encountered

him in a combat and he struck her with his sword on the shoulder. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw her wound bleeding, he called to her son, "You, son of Umm 'Imarah. Your mother! Bandage her wound! May Allah bless your family! Your mother is better than so-and-so (and he named many names). May Allah have mercy on your family! Your stepfather is better than so-and-so (and again he named many people). May Allah have mercy on your family!"

Umm 'Imarah turned to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said to him, "Pray to Allah that He makes us in your company in Paradise."

Thereupon the Prophet replied, "Oh Allah, make them in my company in Heaven."

Umm 'Imarah's heart was comforted by those words and she said in ecstasy, "By Allah, I don't mind any harm that may befall me in this life."

She is yet another bright example for women and girls to follow. She loved jihad without considering forsaking it. She deserves to be in Paradise with the one

dearest to her, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). She did what many of her Muslim brothers could not.

The Battle of Uhud was an occasion for the unbelievers to retaliate after what had befallen them in Badr. Thanks to Allah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) survived.

A few hours later, the Prophet (peace be upon him) pulled his army together and ordered the Muslims to chase the army of the Quraysh before it reached Makkah. The command reached Umm 'Imarah. She tried to rise and join the army, but her wound disabled her. She fell on her bed and allowed herself to be nursed.

On his way back, the Messenger (peace be upon him) saw his prime task was to visit her, and he was pleased at her recovery. That visit gave her more strength to continue in jihad for the sake of Allah. She used to go with the other women in the company of the army to provide emergency care and fight when necessary.

She was present at Al-Hudaybiyah, Khaybar, 'Umratul-Qadiyah, Hunayn, and the Pledge of Ar-Radwan

with the Prophet (peace be upon him). When Musaylamah the Liar appeared in the land of Yamamah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent him a message with Umm 'Imarah's son, Habib bin Zayd.

Musaylamah did not respect the world-wide norms of that time of respecting messengers and guaranteeing their safety. He asked Habib, "Do you testify that I am the Messenger of Allah?"

Habib answered, "No."

"Do you testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah?"

"Yes, I do.

Then Musaylamah bound Habib's arms and legs and started to cut off his limbs one by one while asking, "Do you testify that I am the Messenger of Allah?"

Without faltering, he answered no to all the questions until he died as a martyr whose faith was as firm and steady as a mountain.

Umm 'Imarah's reaction to the terrible news was only the utterance of the disaster *du`a'*: "To Allah we belong and to Him is our return. Allah, reward me for my disaster." She swore to get justice.

Time passed and the Prophet (peace be upon him) died. Some of the Arabs declared apostasy, among them Musaylamah. The first caliph, Abu Bakr, prepared the army to fight him. Umm 'Imarah was the first one to volunteer in the army, due to her son's murder.

On the battlefield, Umm 'Imarah struck hard with her sword and relentlessly fought despite her wounds. The specter of her murdered son only spurred her on in the confrontation. After the battle, the victorious Muslim army managed to seize Musaylama. Many men wanted to have the honor of killing him with their own hands, among whom were Wahshiy and Umm 'Imarah's son 'Abdullah, who were stabbing him to death. She reached the scene to find him torn into pieces. It was only then that her heart was relieved.

The soldiers noticed that she had lost her hand but was still standing firm, despite the wound. Her appearance

reminded them of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had said to her: "Who can endure what you are enduring, Umm 'Imarah?" Everyone hurried to attend to her wound, and they all returned victoriously to Madînah, where Abu Bakr received them with congratulations. He visited her many times during her illness.

When 'Umar succeeded to the caliphate, he did not forget to take care of her. He was even criticized for his over-attentiveness of her, but he only answered, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say, 'On the Day of Uhud, whenever I turned right or left, I saw her fighting to protect me.'" ·

Thus Umm 'Imarah deserves to be a model for all women in all eras. May Allah have mercy on her soul.

The principle of equality between men and women concerning rights vexed her somewhat. She once asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), "I see that men have all the privileges while women are not mentioned in anything."

The answer to her question was revealed in verses of Qur'an:

❴For Muslim men and women,— for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise,— for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.❵

(Al-Ahzab, 35)

Is there any formula for the equality between men and women which is more perfect than that for the contemporary women to strive for?

May Allah have mercy on Umm 'Imarah, her husband, and her sons, the great Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

